

REGIONAL DISTRICT OF NANAIMO

**REGIONAL PARKS AND TRAILS SELECT COMMITTEE
REGULAR MEETING**

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 16, 2016

12:00PM

(RDN Committee Room, 6300 Hammond Bay Road, Nanaimo)

A G E N D A

PAGES

CALL TO ORDER

DELEGATIONS

Motion to receive late delegation.

MINUTES

3-5

Minutes of the Regular Regional Parks and Trails Advisory Committee meeting held October 20, 2015

Motion to approve Minutes.

BUSINESS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

COMMUNICATIONS/CORRESPONDENCE

6-9

T. Osborne, RDN to Department of Fisheries and Oceans – Licensing, **RE: Oyster Harvesting Concerns**

10

K. Fulton, NCC to T. Osborne, RDN, **RE: Conservation Covenant Agreement with NCC**

Motion to receive Communications/Correspondence

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

REPORTS

11-23

Monthly Update of Community and Regional Parks and Trails Projects –Nov 2015 – Jan 2016

24-30

Nanaimo River Bridge Equestrian Accessibility Report

31-34

Event Permit Framework for Mount Benson Regional Park Report

Motion to receive Reports.

BUSINESS ARISING FROM DELEGATIONS OR COMMUNICATIONS

NEW BUSINESS

- 35-41 Road Access to Mount Benson Summit
- Regional Parks and Trails 2016 Budget and 5 year Financial Plan.
- 42-44 Coombs to Parksville Rail Trail Project Update

IN CAMERA

That pursuant to Section 90(1) (e) of the Community Charter the Committee proceed to an In Camera Committee meeting to consider items related to land and legal issues.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion to adjourn.

NEXT MEETING

April 5th, 2016
RDN Committee Room

REGIONAL DISTRICT OF NANAIMO

**MINUTES OF THE
REGIONAL PARKS AND TRAILS SELECT COMMITTEE MEETING
HELD ON TUESDAY OCTOBER 20, 2015 AT 12:00 PM
IN THE RDN COMMITTEE ROOM**

Attendance: Director Maureen Young, Electoral Area 'C'
Director Alec McPherson, Electoral Area 'A'
Director Bob Rogers, Electoral Area 'E'
Director Ian Thorpe, City of Nanaimo
Director Teunis Westbroek, Town of Qualicum Beach
Director Marc Lefebvre, City of Parksville

Staff: Tom Osborne, General Manager of Recreation and Parks
Paul Thorkelsson, Chief Administrative Officer
Wendy Marshall, Manager of Park Services
Ann-Marie Harvey, Recording Secretary

Regrets: Director Colin Haime, Chair, District of Lantzville
Director Julian Fell, Electoral Area 'F'

CALL TO ORDER

Due to Director Haime's absence, the Committee appointed Director Westbroek to Chair the meeting.

Chair Westbroek called the meeting to order at 11:57 am.

MINUTES

MOVED Director Lefebvre, SECONDED Director Thorpe that the Minutes of the Regular Regional Parks and Trails Select Committee meeting held June 16, 2015 be approved.

CARRIED

BUSINESS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

COMMUNICATIONS/CORRESPONDENCE

Mr. Osborne noted that the correspondence from J. Turlock should be titled Benson Creek Falls, not Mt. Benson.

MOVED Director Lefebvre, SECONDED Director McPherson that the following Correspondence be received as corrected:

J. Turlock, Prov. Of BC – MFLNRO to L. Fesiak, RDN, **RE: Benson Creek Falls Renewal of Crown Land**

B. Smith, Canadian Wildlife Service to E. McCulloch, RDN, **RE: Request for Authorization of Proposed Change in Use for Ecological Gift BC109**

S. Yates to Director Houle, RDN, **RE: Descanso Bay Oyster Harvesting**

CARRIED

REPORTS

Monthly Update of Community and Regional Parks and Trails Projects –June - August 2015 **Monthly Update of Community and Regional Parks and Trails Projects –September 2015**

Ms. Marshall answered questions from the directors regarding items in the report.

E & N Trail

Ms. Marshall updated that staff are at the permitting stage. She noted that at the Church Rd crossing the original plan was to swing the trail away from the rail by 30meters to avoid a \$500,000.00 crossing. ICF have told staff that a cueing study would have to be done and that a 30 meter distance may not be adequate. Because the rail is not in use at this time, the cost of the study can be put off with the understanding that once the rail line becomes active again that the study would then need to be done and the crossing upgraded at that time. MOU in works now with ICF. Staff have met with the City of Parksville to work around the water line and to use Springwood Park and the service road to access the trail head. This new plan in Springwood will provide some cost savings.

MOVED Director Lefebvre, **SECONDED Director** Rogers that the reports be received.

CARRIED

BUSINESS ARISING FROM THE COMMUNICATIONS/CORRESPONDENCE/DELEGATONS

S. Yates to Director Houle, RDN, **RE: Descanso Bay Oyster Harvesting**

MOVED Director Thorpe, **SECONDED Director** Lefebvre that the RDN write a letter to advise the Department of Fisheries and Oceans of the concerns of over harvesting of oysters at Descanso Bay Regional Park and those operating without a license.

CARRIED

NEW BUSINESS

Mt. Benson Race Request

Ms. Marshall told the Committee of the requests from groups who want run “Grouse Grind” type races at Mt. Benson Regional Park. The issues is that Mt. Benson does not have the level of development as the North Vancouver trail and RDN and NALT staff already are concerned with the volume of use as it is now, as well, there is no staging area to support a race.

She said staff would take the next few years to look at the volume and development potential to support these kinds of races.

MOVED Director Thorpe, **SECONDED Director** Young that the RDN not permit race requests to use the Mount Benson Regional Parks trail system at this time due to trail degradation and parking issues.

CARRIED

TLC Transfer of Properties

Mr. Osborne gave an update with TLC and Nanaimo River Regional Park. The Nature Conservancy Canada is now on title for the park and the RDN has worked with the agency with Moorecroft and Englishman River Regional Parks.

IN CAMERA

MOVED Director Rogers, SECONDED Director Lefebvre that pursuant to Sections 90(1) (e) and (i), and 90 (2) (d) of the Community Charter the Committee proceed to an In Camera Committee meeting to consider items related to land acquisition, solicitor-client privilege, and third-party business interests.

Time: 12:35pm

CARRIED

ADJOURNMENT

MOVED Director Lefebvre, SECONDED Director Rogers that the meeting be adjourned at 1:25pm.

CARRIED

Chairperson

Osborne, Tom

From: Osborne, Tom
Sent: Friday, December 04, 2015 2:45 PM
To: 'fishing-peche@dfo-mpo.gc.ca'
Cc: Marshall, Wendy
Subject: Shellfish Harvesting Concerns - Descanso Bay Regional Park / Gabriola Island, BC
Attachments: Fwd: Item for POSAC agenda

Department of Fisheries and Oceans - Licensing:

This e-mail is in regard to a concern of local resident from Gabriola Island, BC that was brought forward to the Regional District of Nanaimo Board. (E-mail attached)

At the Regional District of Nanaimo Regular Board Meeting held November 24 / 15 the following resolution was approved:

"That the Regional District of Nanaimo write a letter to advise the Department of Fisheries and Oceans of the concerns of over harvesting of oysters at Descanso Bay Regional Park and those operating without a license."

If this information could be relayed to the appropriate DFO personnel for follow-up would be appreciated. Should DFO staff require additional information in regard to shellfish harvesting on the foreshore of Descanso Bay Regional Park, they can contact Wendy Marshall, RDN Manager of Parks. Ms. Marshall can be reached at 1-888-828-2069 or by email at wmarshall@rdn.bc.ca.

Link to area of concern: <http://rdn.bc.ca/cms/wpattachments/wpID1247atID5371.pdf>

Regards,

Tom Osborne

Tom Osborne
General Manager of Recreation and Parks Services

Regional District of Nanaimo Recreation and Parks Dept.
830 West Island Highway
Parksville, BC
V9P 2X4

(250) 248-3252 / Toll Free 1-888-828-2069

www.rdn.bc.ca

The contents of this electronic mail transmission are *privileged*, intended to be *confidential* and for the sole use of the designated recipient. If this message has been misdirected, or if a resend is desired, please contact the sender as soon as possible.

Osborne, Tom

From: Howard Houle <howardhoule@yahoo.ca>
Sent: Monday, October 05, 2015 2:30 PM
To: Osborne, Tom
Subject: Fwd: Item for POSAC agenda
Attachments: Descanso Bay oyster harvesting.docx; ATT00001.htm

Follow Up Flag: Flag for follow up
Flag Status: Flagged

Hi tom one for the RPTSC
Howard

Sent from my iPad

Begin forwarded message:

From: Susan <susanemilyyates@gmail.com>
Date: October 5, 2015 at 12:37:55 PM PDT
To: Howard Houle <howardhoule@yahoo.ca>
Cc: Deborah Ferens <debferens@hotmail.com>
Subject: **Item for POSAC agenda**

Hi Howard - could you forward the attached letter to the appropriate POSAC person if need be? Thanks very much,

Regards,

Susan

susanemilyyates@gmail.com

Dear Editor,

For the first time since the Clayoquot summer of 1993 I feel compelled to engage in civil disobedience in defense of my island home, and it's not because of anchor-rage, pipeline protest, or ferry frustrations, all well-known problems we must continue to work on. No, my distress, shared equally by my Descanso Bay park and campground friends, results from watching van-loads of visitors and campers come once or twice a year during our summer's lowest tides, to pillage the intertidal zone from its lowest to highest point.

These visitors have no compunction about filling bags full of oysters *without a licence*, from the shores of one of our favourite natural areas, beloved by residents and off-island campers. I endured the rage-inducing experience of having two of the oyster pillagers ask me if I had a printer, so that they could print as many licences as possible before the low-tide was over, on Sunday August 2. You see, our diligent campground operator had told this group of 'harvesters' that they could not take bag-loads of oysters from the park beach without a licence, something they very well knew before they started their illegal activity.

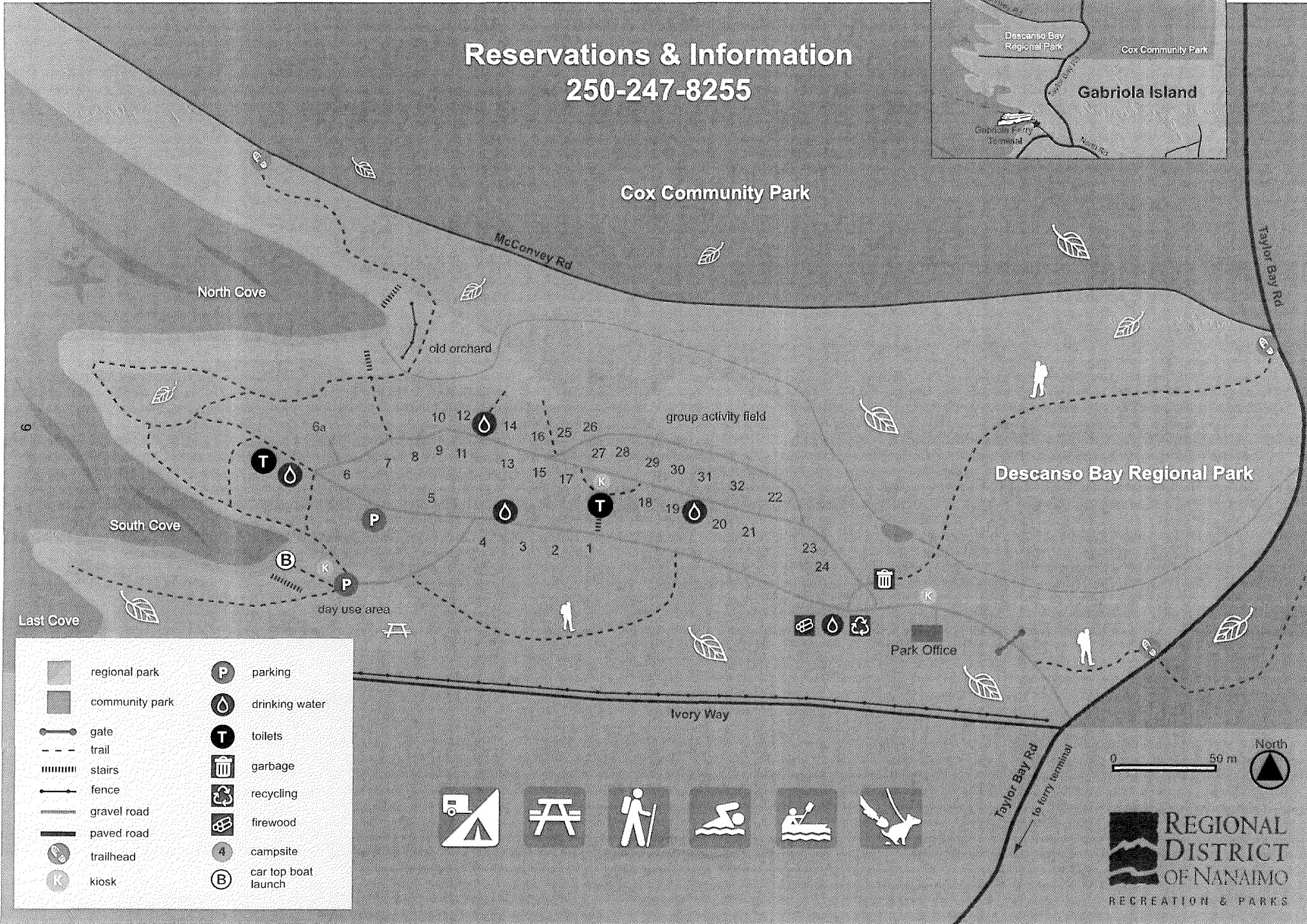
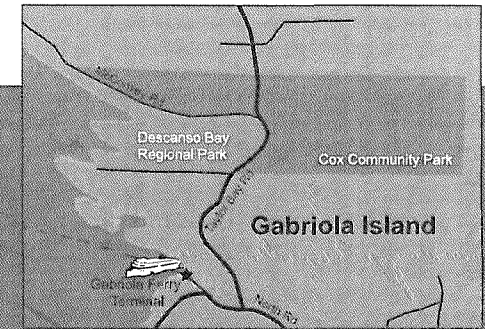
Given that this activity is legal once a licence is issued, and given that this is just one more environmental travesty we must endure because of provincial and federal government regulations that are not actually regulatory at all, but rather easy money-grabs (for the licences) that allow deprecation in environmentally precious areas, I'm ready to walk the beach at low tide and prevent the pillaging. After discussing this with a few friends, apparently others are willing to join me in saying, "enough is enough."

Those of us who live here, and who have spent many years working diligently to preserve and protect what little is left of our beleaguered natural spaces, would never consider the shellfish in our coastal parks to be ours for the taking in such a greedy and selfish manner. The oysters in Descanso Bay campground have been carefully restocked over the past 30 years so that there are enough for each of us to take just a few, and leave some, especially the ones in the very low tide zone, for re-seeding.

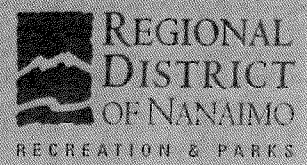
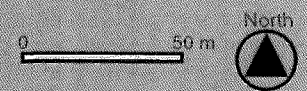
I am wondering whether we might convince our Regional District, via POSAC or another supportive group, to request that the provincial/federal government does NOT issue licences for harvesting shellfish from the beaches in our parks, and in this specific case, our popular and much-appreciated campground park. As dwellers on this fragile island it is our responsibility to protect and steward its natural environment for future generations. If regulations cannot be changed swiftly and effectively, civil disobedience may be the only route, and I will consider standing in front of incoming careless oyster pickers in defense of my home.

Descanso Bay Regional Park

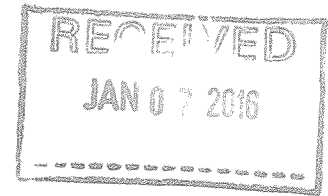
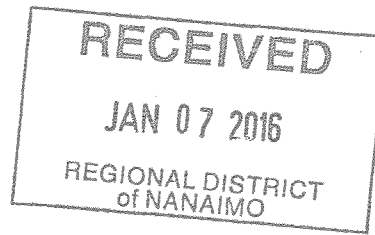
Reservations & Information
250-247-8255



- | | | | |
|--|----------------|--|---------------------|
| | regional park | | parking |
| | community park | | drinking water |
| | gate | | toilets |
| | trail | | garbage |
| | stairs | | recycling |
| | fence | | firewood |
| | gravel road | | campsite |
| | paved road | | car top boat launch |
| | trailhead | | |
| | kiosk | | |



Mr. Tom Osborne
Regional District of Nanaimo
Recreation and Parks
6300 Hammond Bay Road
Nanaimo, BC
V9T 6N2



January 03, 2016

Dear Mr. Tom Osborne,

**Re: Conservation Covenant Agreement with The Nature Conservancy of Canada
("NCC")**

I am writing to follow up on the Nature Conservancy of Canada's (NCC's) monitoring visit to Moorecroft Regional Park on January 2, 2015. The purpose of the monitoring visit was to verify compliance with your Conservation Covenant Agreement. During this visit NCC representatives did not observe any violations.

We would like to thank you for your continuing contribution to the protection of British Columbia's natural heritage. Generations to come will benefit from the vibrant environment and biodiversity you are helping to protect.

Please do not hesitate to contact me with any questions you may have.

Happy New Year,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Katy Fulton".

Katy Fulton

West Coast Stewardship Coordinator
Nature Conservancy of Canada, BC Region
200-825 Broughton St, Victoria BC V8W 1E5
katy.fulton@natureconservancy.ca
Telephone: (250) 479 - 3191 x 248

TO: Tom Osborne
General Manager of Recreation & Parks

DATE: January 12, 2016

FROM: Wendy Marshall
Manager of Park Services

MEETING: D69 Recreation Commission –Feb 18, 2016
All POSAC's, RPTSC, EA 'A' PRC

FILE:

**SUBJECT: Monthly Update of Community Parks and Regional Parks and Trails Projects-
November and December 2015**

RECOMMENDATION

That the Parks Update Report for November and December 2015 be received as information.

During the last two months of 2015 staff have been involved with the following projects and issues.

Electoral Area Community Parks

Area A

At Nelson Road boat launch staff removed wood debris from the ramp and cleared the stairs. At Ivor Road Community park staff responded to a neighbour's phone call regarding hazard trees. The trees were removed and a faller was contacted to schedule an arborists report on several standing stems. At Cedar Skate Park staff removed garbage, checked/cleaned the toilet enclosure and removed graffiti.

Area B

With much appreciated assistance and effort from local volunteers, a new playground was designed and installed at Rollo McClay Community Park. In addition, staff conducted maintenance work at the park's retention pond. Parks staff met with local Gabriola Island dog park advocates to discuss the possibility of developing a dog park at Rollo McClay CP.

In consultation with community volunteers, signage assessment work was carried out at 707 Community Park. Development and installation of the signs is expected to occur throughout the winter with assistance from area park stewards.

Along the Whalebone Area trails and parks, survey work was completed to accurately locate and mark property boundaries. Lumber and debris was removed from the trails.

Staff installed new posts and regulation signage throughout various Electoral Area B Community Parks, as well as conducted garbage clean ups. A stolen loading zone sign was replaced at El Verano boat launch and has since been stolen again.

Area C – Extension

Staff ordered plants and oversaw installation of several native plant species in Extension Miners Park Community Park to replace trees and shrubs lost during summer drought. The final design for a future memorial sign in Extension Miners Community Park was submitted for production in December. Installation is anticipated in April 2016.

At Nanaimo River Canyon Community Park staff removed garbage and cleaned the park entrance.

Area C - East Wellington/Pleasant Valley

At Anders and Dorrit's Community Park staff conducted park inspections and modified and secured the grape arbor with diagonal supports.

At Meadow Drive Community Park planning and operations staff coordinated the installation of a concrete bench for the playground area. A concrete vault toilet was ordered and is scheduled for installation in February 2016. A contract for a future picnic shelter (scheduled for installation in summer 2016) was awarded in December following review of three proposals by local timber framers. Park staff removed arbor ties from the park and cleaned up the old pumpkins from Halloween.

At Benson Meadows Path park staff removed a boulder from the ditch which was blocking a culvert at a neighboring resident's driveway. Once at the scene it was found that the blocked culvert was not due to the trail upgrade but a poorly constructed headwall when the development was first built.

Park staff removed garbage from the parking lot at Creekside Community Park.

Area E

Staff cleared debris off trails at Brickyard Community Park and regularly removed garbage at Jack Bagley Field.

At the request of a park neighbour staff installed a park boundary sign as well as a park use regulation sign at Sea Ridge Drive Trail. MoTI consulted parks staff regarding kayak company use of Nanoose Area water accesses.

Parks staff ordered and oversaw the installation of several native tree species in Stone Lake Drive Community Park. A contractor installed a new cedar community park sign.

Construction at Blueback Community Park ceased early December due to poor weather conditions. Operations are expected to recommence early 2016 when conditions are favourable again.

Staff reviewed and approved a proposal by the Nanoose Place Society to install a picnic shelter adjacent to the Nanoose Place Community Centre.

Area F

Parks staff met with the Area F POSAC Trails sub-committee to discuss next steps for developing the ACT trails.

At Harris Crescent Community Park staff responded to a complaint regarding a hazard tree, removing the trees and debris. A fire pit was cleaned up by the stage at the Errington Farmers Market.

Area G

At Lee Road Park Community Park staff went to a call regarding stream bank erosion that was occurring on the park side of French Creek. Staff observations determined that this was natural stream morphology and there was no imminent danger. Staff will monitor the bank erosion over time. This was reported back to the concerned resident.

At Dashwood Community Park staff straightened and re-cemented basketball standards. The "S" hooks for the swings were also replaced.

Staff installed expanded metal on the bridges at Hawthorne Rise and at River Edge Drive staff removed garbage reported by a local resident.

A developer's contractor and a tree faller removed several identified hazard trees at Blue Water CP at their cost. Shortly after removal RDN parks staff planted the area with donated Hemlock and Spruce plugs.

Staff met with an Area G landowner to discuss a potential parkland acquisition.

Area H

At Deep Bay Community Trail Park staff repaired the parks/neighbour's fence that was rotten and blew over during a high wind event. At Henry Morgan staff seasonally cut the ornamental grass and conducted other park maintenance. Garbage was removed from Dunsmuir Community Park.

Community Works Projects

Area A

Staff coordinated a public Open House event (held Dec. 2nd) for the future bridge development over the Nanaimo River within the MCRT. Tasks included development of a project website, ads and social media updates, information boards and a public survey, hall booking, event set-up and participation.

Area B

Staff concluded work with the landscape architect consultant on the Village Way design. Working with structural and civil engineering consultants, staff completed the application package for MoTI and submitted for review. Work continued with the engineering consultant on a schedule of quantities and cost estimates. Meetings were held with MoTI to go over design concerns and with the Area Director and engineer to review design and cost approaches.

Area C - Extension

The new stairs were inspected at Extension Miners and the trail maintenance work was carried out.

Area F

Trail surfacing compaction and identification signage installs have now been completed at the Price Road section of the Arrowsmith Community Trail.

At the recommendation of the subcommittee and with the approval of the Area Director, parks staff designed and prepared trail construction contract documents for a public trail within the Cranswick undeveloped road allowance to connect the end of Cranswick Rd to Matterson Road. A MoTI trail

construction permit was received and a contract was awarded to undertake development. A culvert was installed and grubbing completed; the remainder of trail construction will be completed in the spring of 2016.

Area E

At Claudet Road CP park staff installed a bear proof garbage can and improved drainage on the trails. Further trail improvements will occur in the month of January as weather points out any other potential deficiencies. Park staff removed protruding roots in certain sections of the trail. A split rail fence was installed; water service chain link fence will be installed Early December. Park staff drafted up signs for the new park and had them produced and installed.

Regional Significant Gas Tax Project

E&N Rail Trail

Staff worked with the environmental consultant on the submission of a Sec 9 Notification to MFLNRO. Staff also worked with the engineering consultant on development and BC Bid issue of a Request for Qualifications, due mid-January. A Development Permit Application package was completed and submitted to Development Services. Staff worked with the City of Parksville on a revised route through Springwood Park including holding several meetings on preliminary drawings, surveying and general arrangements. A draft Memorandum of Understanding was submitted to the Island Corridor Foundation regarding delayed Alberni Line compliance with road crossing regulations. The ALC Panel decision regarding Rail Trail along Alberni Line was received with fencing required along the ALR lands. Staff prepared and submitted an appeal to the ALC. Staff worked with the engineering consultant on approval submissions to ICF and SVI. Staff submitted a revised Church Rd crossing application to MoTI. Staff engaged a gravel consultant to assist in development of final specifications and consulted with other Island RDs for their specs. Staff reviewed updated cost estimates and required design changes.

Regional Parks and Trails

Coats Marsh Regional Park

Contract prices were obtained and a contractor selected for development of a pedestrian trail at the park. Area neighbours were notified in writing of the upcoming construction, expected to occur in January, though is weather-dependent. Provincial Wildlife permits have been received and an environmental consultant has been retained in order to satisfy Federal Government requirements for development of the site, with regards to safeguarding amphibian species.

Descanso Bay Regional Park

Park staff prepared a Request for Proposals for the 2016-2020 operation of Descanso Bay Regional Park. Siting and design of a change room for the park day use area was completed. Campground advertising was purchased for the online Destination BC website(www.helloBC.com).

Englishman River Regional Park

Staff responded to maintenance issues identified by the Volunteer Park Warden including; garbage issues, ATV trespass, vandalism, graffiti and suspect hazardous trees.

Park staff installed trail closure signs on an unsanctioned trail near Top Bridge at the request of The Nature Trust of British Columbia. Park staff are working with the GIS department mapping and making new directional signage for the park.

An eighth year of water quality, benthic invertebrate and spawning fish monitoring was completed along DFO's fish channel by VIU students, with help this year from the Mid-Island Habitat Enhancement Society. As usual, financial assistance was provided by RDN Parks to help with laboratory costs.

Park staff removed a deer carcass reported by a Conservation Officer.

Horne Lake Regional Park

A contractor repaired the boat launch as lake levels were low enough to do so. Park staff met with the Coastal Fire Centre to discuss work / training opportunities. Staff drafted new signs to replace existing damaged, incorrect or old signage. Website maps were updated. Campground advertising was purchased for the online Destination BC website (www.helloBC.com).

Little Qualicum River Regional Park

Staff contacted Ministry of Transportation staff and the adjacent landowner regarding installation of vehicle barricades and control of gated park access.

A gate key was distributed to DFO for the purpose of access for a successful river restoration project involving the depositing of salmon carcasses in the river.

BC Conservation Foundation inspection of their four Large Woody Debris structures showed they were generally in good order.

Moorecroft Regional Park

Staff installed expanded metal on the Caretakers House stairs. Due to high rain events causing flooding at certain spots on the trail staff installed trail drainage to relieve flooding/ponding.

Staff reviewed submitted proposals for architectural services pertaining to Kennedy Hall, the Caretaker's residence and a future washroom. A contract was awarded in December.

Staff toured Miss Moore's cabin with board members of the Parksville Museum who, later in 2016, will assess the building's potential for restoration and management by the museum.

Morden Colliery Regional Trail

Staff conducted site visits with interested contractors to obtain price quotes for trail resurfacing work.

Mount Benson Regional Park

Staff concluded negotiations with NALT on the final conservation covenant. Staff organized publications of notice of Board's intent to charge park titles with a covenant, and web information page on the process. Staff worked with the lawyer, NALT and Corporate Services on final document preparation and inclusion in January Board agenda.

New trail head signs were designed by staff and fabricated. Each sign has a map showing their location with emergency phone numbers and coordinates to their position. NALT will be installing them when weather permits.

Staff using utilities tractor put in small drainage ditches across the Old Road Loop trail.

Nanaimo River Regional Park

Staff put up high water and thin ice signs in the park. The trail and stairs were cleared of leaves.

Parksville - Qualicum Links

Staff liaised with the Chair of the Greater Nanaimo Cycling Coalition, now representing D69 given the folding of the Oceanside Cycling Coalition group.

Trans Canada Trail

Staff liaised with the TCT headquarters regarding Cedar route plan being promoted by an area resident and confirmed no change in ability to realize new route through Cedar in the short term.

Further to direction from Island Timberlands, staff posted temporary trail closure notices on the Extension Ridge Trail.

Miscellaneous

Staff installed thin ice signage and "Caution High Water" signs at various parks in the district.

Staff assisted with the Winter Wonderland set-up at Oceanside Place.

Staff provided the Capital Regional District with background information on Haslam Creek Suspension Bridge and copy of as-built plans, and park agreements list.

Staff participated in the VIU Shadow-Mentor Program, providing a VIU Recreation student an opportunity to shadow with Park staff for a day. Tasks included site visits and an Open House set-up.

Staff attended a meeting regarding Brant closures within the Parksville-Qualicum Wildlife Management Area.

Work continued on some in camera land issues and acquisitions.

Fire

Staff attended the Coastal Fire Centre's regional meeting on revisions to the fire control cost sharing agreement model and responded to survey request for parkland conditions.

Off-Road Vehicles

Staff liaised with the Province on the application of new law and issues concerning local enforcement services' awareness of the new and existing law. Staff participated in the UBCM conference call on the new law's application including on Regionally-owned lands, and confirmed the RDN's interest in exploring the possibility. Staff also advised NCC, TNT, and DUC of the potential for application of the new law to their lands.

Geese Management

Staff attended several meetings with other regional and island partners and experts on Geese Management. A regional committee has been formed and staff will continue to sit on the committee. The goal is to move forward with Geese Management within the Region.

2015 Budget Development

The final changes were made to the preliminary budget and the parks budgets were presented to the senior management team and each EA budget to the Area Director. In January, the budget will be updated to include carry forward projects and to update the year end surplus based on the final 2015 expenditures.

Sharepoint

Staff held several meetings with IT staff to review new park libraries and means of transferring files to the new Sharepoint system efficiently. Work will continue on clarifying the process and training the parks team.

Park Use Permits and Events

Area A

- Concluded a park use permit with VIU's G.R. Paine Horticultural Centre for the removal of wild ginger propagules from the Douglas-fir plantation at Nanaimo River Regional Park by Tamagawa Program students receiving training in sustainable harvesting techniques. The majority of young plants propagated will be planted out at Milner Garden and Woodlands; the balance will be returned to NRRP for planting out.

Area B

- Concluded a park use permit with the 4H Club for Rollo McClay Community Park concession use while community volunteers worked with Parks staff to build the new park playground.

Area G

- Concluded annual December Bird Count permit with the Arrowsmith Naturalists for survey at Englishman River Regional Park and the Little Qualicum River Estuary Regional Conservation Area.
- Liaised with film company about potential Movie of the Week shoot locations in Parksville area; no Park Use Permit concluded.

Website and Communications

Staff updated pages including the Park Highlights list and Mount Benson Regional Park page plus created a Witchcraft Lake Regional Trail page.

The park pages for Spring-Summer 2016 Active Living Guide were created.



Manager of Parks Services



General Manager Concurrence

TO: Tom Osborne
General Manager of Recreation & Parks

DATE: Feb 5, 2016

FROM: Wendy Marshall
Manager of Park Services

MEETING: D69 Recreation Commission
All POSAC's, RPTSC

FILE:

SUBJECT: Monthly Update of Community Parks and Regional Parks and Trails Projects- January 2016

RECOMMENDATION

That the Parks Update Report for January 2016 be received as information.

Regional and Community Parks and Trails

During January staff have been involved with the following projects and issues.

Electoral Area Community Parks

Area A

Staff continued investigation of a significant hazard tree issue at Ivor Road Community, following a call from a neighbour after a tree fell from the park onto private property and caused minor damage. An arborist has been consulted and staff will be considering tree and risk management issues before proceeding with additional work at the site.

Staff removed a large amount of wood debris from the Nelson Boat ramp.

At the Cedar Skatepark staff removed dumped garbage and completed a park inspection. A contractor was enlisted to remove a large amount of spray paint graffiti from the skateboarding bowl and ramps.

Area B

Following the construction of a new playground at Rollo McClay Community Park, staff have been investigating drainage management options for the site. During January there have been repeated incidents of significant graffiti issues at the park. Cost estimate info was sought from a fencing contractor for planned improvements to the upper and lower ball fields. This work is scheduled for March.

Staff replaced stolen park signage twice at El Verano Community Boat Launch.

Staff liaised with community volunteers regarding signage work that needs to be conducted at both 707 and Cox Community Parks.

Following survey work in the Whalebone area Community Parks, staff have been working on a development plan for increased and improved signage for these Community Parks, as well as examining options for dealing with a small number of trespass issues.

Trees in the park on Decourcy Drive were checked for signs of root rot following a report from an adjacent property owner after a tree fell down and caused damage to his property. An arborist will be contracted to do an assessment of the stand.

Park naming information was provided to DeCourcy Island residents to consider at their February 7th Resident's Association meeting.

Staff attended a site meeting with the developer and Director Houle regarding their upcoming subdivision application at 1520 McCollum Rd to discuss potential parkland dedication options. Once an application has been made it will be referred to the Area B POSAC for consideration.

Area C – Extension

At Extension Miners Community Park staff installed expanded metal tread material to newly constructed stairs and landings.

Area C – East Wellington / Pleasant Valley

At Creekside community park staff removed garbage from the parking lot.

Area E

At Stone Lake Drive Community Park staff removed scotch broom and cleared debris from trails.

Staff updated a 5-Year Park Project Plan scheduled for final review by the POSAC in February.

Area F

Following completion of trail development work at Price Road, some additional grading and trail improvements were conducted during January.

Following the parking lot development at Errington Community Park, parking curbs/wheel stops were added. Some minor grading and surfacing work will be required for the site and is scheduled for mid-February. Staff also received a report of vandalism, littering and health concern issues at the park. This has been reported to the RCMP.

Staff installed park regulatory signage at and conducted a park clean-up at Meadowood Community Park.

At French Creek School Community Park staff removed garbage and debris and conducted a playground inspection.

Staff attended a site meeting with the development agent regarding the proposed rezoning amendment and subdivision application on Springhill Rd.

Area G

At Blue Water Community Park staff cut high stumps and removed them from site along with other miscellaneous wood debris left behind in park. Staff also prepared a planting plan for future street-side planting.

At Columbia Drive Community Park staff removed garbage from site.

Area H

Park staff conducted maintenance on all beach accesses.

At Oakdowne Community Park concrete barriers were installed to prevent vehicular access from Oakdowne Rd. to Larkdowne Rd.

At Henry Morgan Community Park the Pump Track was weeded and a portion of the trail.

A report to the board was prepared to recommend acceptance of the Province's offer to renew the licence of occupation for Oakdowne Community Park for a 30-year term.

Community Works Projects**Area A**

Staff prepared a board report regarding an equestrian-accessible bridge design option for the future Nanaimo River crossing along the MCRT.

Area B

Further to a MoTI-called halt to Village Way project design and approval work, and higher level efforts to resolve jurisdictional scope issues, staff worked on clarifying the nature of roadside trails that have been permitted in other Vancouver Island regions.

Area E

At Claudet Community Park staff installed drainage along trail entrance and improved entrance area with gravel surfacing. Staff also repaired existing trail drainage.

Regional Significant Gas Tax Project**E&N Rail Trail**

The RFQ process was concluded. Nine compliant submissions were received and five firms pre-qualified to bid on a project tender. Staff obtained updated cost estimates for the project and prepared a report for the February Board meeting regarding project funding sources, RFQ results and move to tender. As well, a report to the Board was prepared to obtain approval to defer some regulatory compliance along the inactive Alberni Line of the E&N. Staff continued to deal with SVI and the ALC on plan approval and revision to fencing requirements.

Regional Parks and Trails**Beachcomber Regional Park**

Park staff conducted park inspections carried out maintenance on the box stairs.

Benson Creek Falls Regional Park

Staff designed and installed a sign regarding vehicles blocking driveways.

Coats Marsh Regional Park

The trail development work scheduled for the southern edge of Coat's Marsh continues to be on hold due to rainfall issues. It is anticipated that we will be able to commence this project later in February.

Descanso Bay Regional Park

Cost estimates for the construction of a change room at the park have been received. Development of this amenity is expected to occur in February.

UV bulb replacement and water treatment system maintenance work was carried out at the park.

A two month (January-February 2016) contract extension for the Descanso Bay Regional Park Operator was awarded to the current operator. The 2016-2020 Park Operator RFP was issued on January 5th. Five interested proponents attended the mandatory site meeting on January 14th. The deadline for proposals is February 2 and the start date for the new contract is March 1st, 2016.

A membership was taken out with the BC Lodging and Campgrounds Association and advertisements for Descanso Bay Regional Park were placed on the Travel BC, Campingrvbc, GoRVing websites as well as in the Super Camping print guide.

Englishman River Regional Park

Park Staff carried out routine inspections of Englishman River Regional Park and Top Bridge Park. Staff responded to maintenance issues identified by the Volunteer Park Warden including; garbage issues, ATV trespass, vandalism, graffiti and suspect hazardous trees.

Horne Lake Regional Park

Staff dealt with Fortis on a new requirement for annual permitting of structures on their SRW.

A membership was taken out with the BC Lodging and Campgrounds Association and advertisements for Horne Lake Regional Park were placed on the Travel BC, Campingrvbc, GoRVing websites as well as in the Super Camping print guide.

Lighthouse Country Regional Trail

Staff repaired poorly draining areas of trail.

Little Qualicum River Regional Park

Heavy equipment and boulder placement work was carried out at LQRRP with the goal of barricading access by ATV's and off road vehicles. Following completion of this project, vandals used heavy equipment to backfill a trench and move several boulders in order to gain access to the barricaded area. Further work is expected to be conducted in February, with ongoing plans to install video surveillance at the site. Prior attempts at installation of security cameras resulted in the theft of the hardware from the park. Staff also met with an adjacent landowner regarding security and illegal dumping issues, requesting notification of any observed malevolent behaviour in the area.

Staff conducted several park inspections in the course of monitoring vehicle access, and also discovered the theft/removal of a large cedar tree.

Moorecroft Regional Park

Work continued with the consultant on the design of the accessible washroom and design for upgrades at Kennedy Hall. Four design options were received and discussed. Costing for the preferred option was obtained for budgeting purposes.

Morden Colliery Regional Trail

An application to the Agricultural Land Commission related to future trail development between the Nanaimo River and Cedar Road was submitted on January 18. There is an estimated 2-month application processing period.

Staff prepared mapping, elevational data, and site plans for the upcoming trail development work along the parking lot to Thatcher Creek section of the trail.

Mount Benson Regional Park

Staff completed preparatory work involved with moving the park conservation covenant through the January Board meetings. Further to Board approval, staff began work with lawyers on the execution and registration of the document.

Parksville Qualicum Beach Links

At Barclay Crescent staff GPS'd trees along park boundary regarding call from park neighbor and arranged for arborist report on trees.

Trans Canada Trail

A web notice was issued that the Extension Ridge Trail closure brought down by landowner Island Timberlands would be extended through the winter until industrial logging activities in the area are completed.

Witchcraft Lake Regional Trail

Park staff gps'd and took measurements of existing parking lot to look at future expansion and improvements.

Miscellaneous

Staff assisted Tourism Vancouver Island with the Phase II Trails Strategy project and responded to the consultant's initial questionnaire.

Staff attended the Greater Nanaimo Cycling Coalition Forum and provided a short presentation on RDN planning work.

Staff began work on updating MIA with regard to agreements and term dates for the purpose of the RDN's annually issued insurance certificate.

Work continued with Recreation staff on the roll-out of the Spring-Summer Active Living Guide and communication to park staff of recreation events being programmed in parks.

The Parks Budgets were updated for actual surplus and project carry-forwards. Changes were also made to update projects costs from previous estimates.

Staff tested the new SharePoint filing system for parks documents. Staff training and a roll over to the new system will take place in February.

Staff continued work on two acquisition files.

Park Use Permits and Events

Parks permits approved and in process include:

Area F

- Work was initiated on the Coombs Family Picnic permit for use of French Creek School Community Park in June.

Area H

- Renewed the MFLNRO permit for the last stage of research at Wildwood Community Park concerning climate change effects on the growth of coastal Douglas-fir and coastal Western Hemlock forests. As was done at Nanaimo River Regional Park in regard to the forest research conducted there, summary research findings will be shared with Wildwood users through simple interpretive signage.



Manager of Parks Services



General Manager Concurrence

TO: Wendy Marshall
Manager of Parks Services

DATE: February 3, 2016

FROM: Lesya Fesiak
Parks Planner

MEETING: RPTSC – February 16, 2016

FILE:

SUBJECT: Nanaimo River Bridge Equestrian Accessibility - Morden Colliery Regional Trail

RECOMMENDATION

That design and development of the multi-use bridge crossing over the Nanaimo River, within the Morden Colliery Regional Trail, incorporate equestrian accessibility (in addition to pedestrian, cyclist and wheelchair accessibility) in response to current community recreational needs and public support.

PURPOSE

To provide information on and recommendations regarding an equestrian-accessible design option for the future multi-use bridge crossing over the Nanaimo River within the Morden Colliery Regional Trail.

BACKGROUND

The Morden Colliery Regional Trail (MCRT) is a 4km-long corridor of Provincial Crown Land, located between Morden Colliery Historic Provincial Park and Hemer Provincial Park. The RDN has managed the MCRT for multi-use recreational trail use (including equestrian use) since 1995, under a License of Occupation from the Province of British Columbia.

Because there is currently no bridge crossing over the Nanaimo River—although historically a rail bridge did exist—the MCRT currently consist of two disjointed segments: a 1km-long south segment and a 2km long north segment. Bridge construction and trail development would complete the MCRT network, thereby creating a continuous 4km-long active transportation link between the communities of Cedar and South Wellington.

On October 28, 2014, the Regional Board approved an updated Feasibility Study for a proposed multi-use bridge crossing over the Nanaimo River within the Morden Colliery Regional Trail (See Appendix I - Project Location). The approved study provided the RDN with an assessment of an older feasibility study (completed in 1999 by Greame and Murray Engineering) as well as updated bridge design and accessibility options, information on required bridge spans and current cost estimates for bridge and trail construction.

At the time of study approval, the following two Board resolutions were carried:

1. *That subsequent design and assessment work proceed under the Steel Truss Bridge option.*
2. *That the equestrian accessible bridge option be vetted through local residents and equestrian groups prior to subsequent design work in order to ensure public support and user demand in consideration of higher construction and maintenance costs.*

Community consultation regarding the equestrian-accessible bridge option was carried out from December 2015 to February 1, 2016. An Open House event was held on December 2, 2015 at the Cedar Heritage Centre with 90 attendees and a Public Survey was available from December 1, 2015 to February 1, 2016 with 147 respondents.

Survey results indicate reasonable community support for an equestrian accessible bridge. Out of 147 respondents, 99 (or 67%) were in favour of an equestrian accessible bridge, despite higher estimated costs. Approximately 35% of respondents identified themselves as members of an equestrian group, and 38% of respondents noted their current equestrian use on completed sections of the MCRT (mainly from Cedar Road to Hemer Provincial Park). Key survey findings are summarized below.

SURVEY DATA	NUMBER OF RESPONSES	PERCENTAGE OF RESPONSES
Number of respondents who currently frequent sections of the MCRT for equestrian use	56 out of 147	38%
Number of respondents who support equestrian use on the future MCRT trail and bridge	99 out of 147	67%
Number of respondents who acknowledge membership in an equestrian group	51 out of 147	35%

Bridge and Trail Design

The proposed bridge crossing over the Nanaimo River within the Morden Colliery Regional Trail (MCRT) consists of two separate steel-truss bridges over two separate channels of the Nanaimo River (See Appendix II – Bridge Conceptual Design). Bridge specifications and estimated costs are outlined below.

Bridge Design	steel truss
Bridge Accessibility	pedestrian, cyclist, wheelchair, equestrian (optional)
Span Lengths	90m – west span; 84m – east span
Deck Width	2.1m
Deck Elevation	200 year flood level (Q200) =10.75m; bridge deck 1.5m above Q200 levels
Total Cost (two bridges)	\$1,473,000 pedestrian, cyclist and wheelchair \$1,623,000 pedestrian cyclist, wheelchair and equestrian

Trail construction within an undeveloped section of the Morden Colliery Regional Trail (a 1km stretch from the Nanaimo River to Cedar Road) will be completed in conjunction with bridge development. The new trail will be similar in design to existing sections of trail (2m wide with gravel surfacing).

In addition to higher construction and long-term maintenance costs, equestrian use on future sections of MCRT, including the proposed multi-use bridge crossing over the Nanaimo River, may conflict with other authorised trail uses (including cycling, wheelchair and stroller access). Horse excrement left on trails by

equestrians, which is currently an issue on the north section of the MCRT (from Cedar Road to Hemer Provincial Park), will need to be dealt with and managed in cooperation with the equestrian community.

ALTERNATIVES

1. That design and development for the two proposed multi-use, steel-truss bridges over the Nanaimo River include equestrian accessibility, in addition to pedestrian, cyclist and wheelchair accessibility, due to public support and current user demand.
2. That design and development for two proposed multi-use steel-truss bridges exclude equestrian accessibility and include only pedestrian, cyclist and wheelchair accessibility.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The cost of bridge construction for two steel-truss, multi-use bridges is estimated at \$1,473,000 for a pedestrian, cyclist and wheelchair accessible bridge and \$1,623,000 to accommodate equestrian use. The estimates include a 30% contingency.

Although there is a nominal construction cost difference between the bridge accessibility types (with an estimated increase of \$150,000 to accommodate equestrian use), an equestrian accessible option has implications for higher long-term maintenance costs. The updated bridge Feasibility Study (Herold Engineering, 2014) recommends thick, wood decking, which is necessary for an equestrian crossing. The wood decking, which is estimated at \$80,000 for two bridge spans, needs to be replaced every 10 years, on average. Several RDN bridges use metal mesh surfacing (not wood decking) which require minimal maintenance and repair; however, these are not equestrian accessible.

Associated trail construction along a 1km-long, undeveloped section of MCRT (from the Nanaimo River to Cedar Road) is estimated at \$250,000. The new trail will be 2m-wide with compacted gravel surfacing to accommodate pedestrian, cyclist, wheelchair and equestrian use. Equestrian trail use will increase the rate of wear on gravel surfacing with implications for higher long-term maintenance costs.

Project development (including future operational costs) will be funded through the Regional Parks and Trails Function. The preliminary 2015-2020 Financial Plan has \$1,975,000 allocated within the Regional Parks and Trails Capital Budget for bridge and trail construction. It is anticipated that \$1,675,000 will come from Regional Parks reserves and the remaining \$300,000 will need to be secured through applicable grant funding. Project design options and estimated costs have been presented to RDN residents through website postings, letters to neighbouring landowners, a public open house and a survey; despite higher construction and maintenance costs, there is reasonable public support for equestrian accessible bridge and trail development (67%, as per survey results).

STRATEGIC PLAN IMPLICATIONS

A multi-use bridge over the Nanaimo River was identified in the 2001 Area 'A' Community Trails Study, the 2005 Regional Parks and Trails Plan, and the 2009 Area 'A' Active Transportation Plan. With the development of a bridge crossing over the Nanaimo River, and a trail connector between the communities of South Wellington and Cedar, the Morden Colliery Regional Trail will function as a true green highway, helping to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from automobile use while promoting active transportation in the local community. It will enhance recreational opportunities for a variety of users in

both the local and the regional community, including pedestrians, cyclists, wheelchair users, and equestrians.

SUMMARY/CONCLUSIONS

On October 28, 2014, the Regional Board approved an updated Feasibility Study completed by Herold Engineering for a proposed multi-use bridge crossing over the Nanaimo River within the Morden Colliery Regional Trail. At that time, the Board directed staff to consult with the community regarding an equestrian accessible bridge option in order to assess public support and user demand in consideration of higher estimated construction and maintenance costs.

An equestrian accessible bridge option was vetted through the community by way of a public Open House (December 2, 2015) and a Public Survey (December 2015 to February 2016). Open House feedback and public survey results indicate reasonable community support for an equestrian bridge (67% according to survey results). The MCRT is a favourable route for equestrians with 38% of survey respondents noting their current equestrian use on developed sections of the MCRT (mainly the 2km-long north section from Cedar Road to Hemer Provincial Park).

Project development (including future operational costs) will be funded through the Regional Parks and Trails Function. The preliminary 2015-2020 Financial Plan has \$1,975,000 allocated within the Regional Parks and Trails Capital Budget for bridge and trail construction. It is anticipated that \$1,675,000 will come from Regional Parks reserves and the remaining \$300,000 will need to be secured through applicable grant funding.

Equestrian accessibility will increase bridge construction costs by an estimated \$150,000 (\$1,623,000 with equestrian accessibility versus \$1,473,000 without). There are further implications for higher long-term maintenance cost associated with equestrian use on the future trail and bridges due to material requirements and increased rate of wear.

Staff recommend that the design and development for the two proposed multi-use, steel-truss bridges over the Nanaimo River include equestrian accessibility, in addition to pedestrian, cyclist and wheelchair accessibility, due to public support and current user demand.



Report Writer



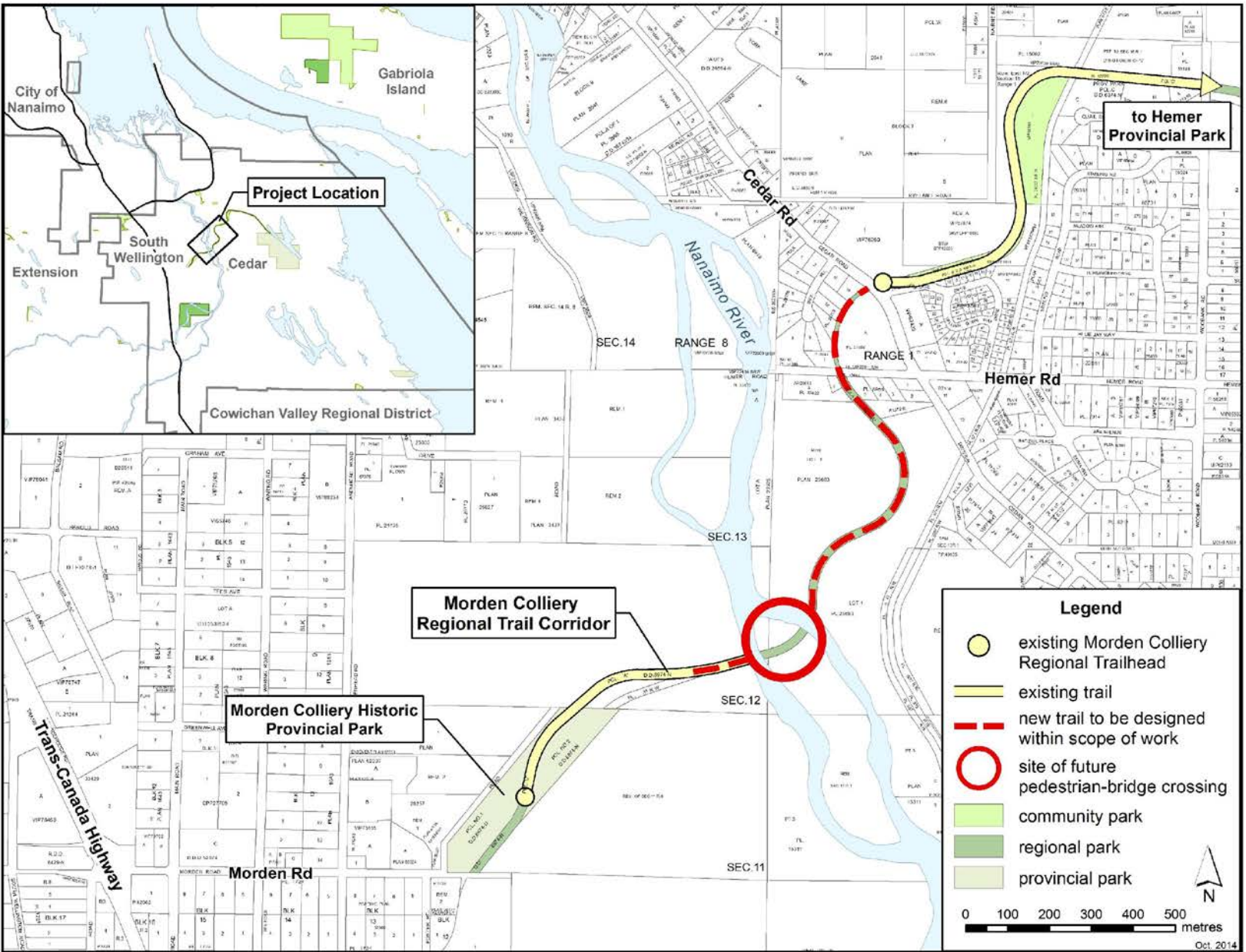
Manager Concurrence



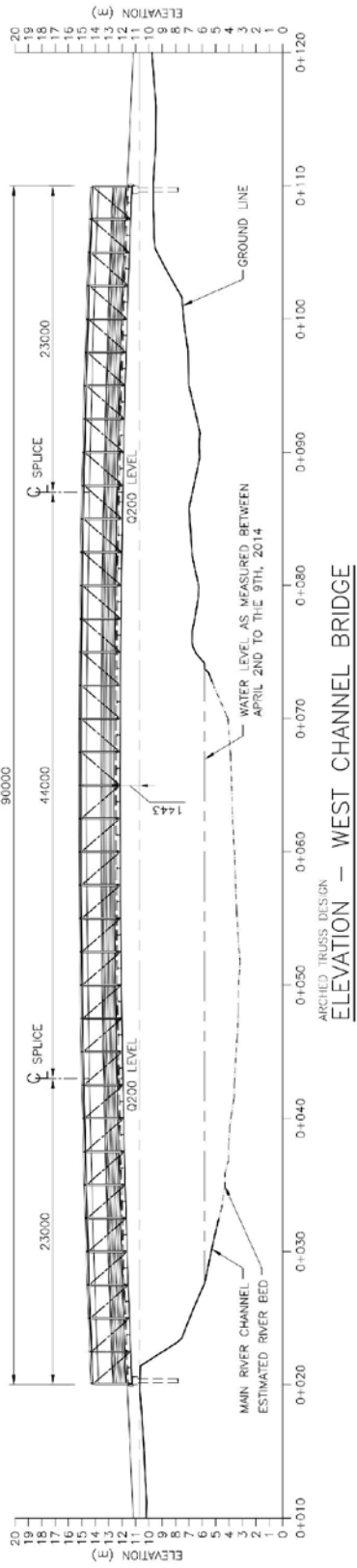
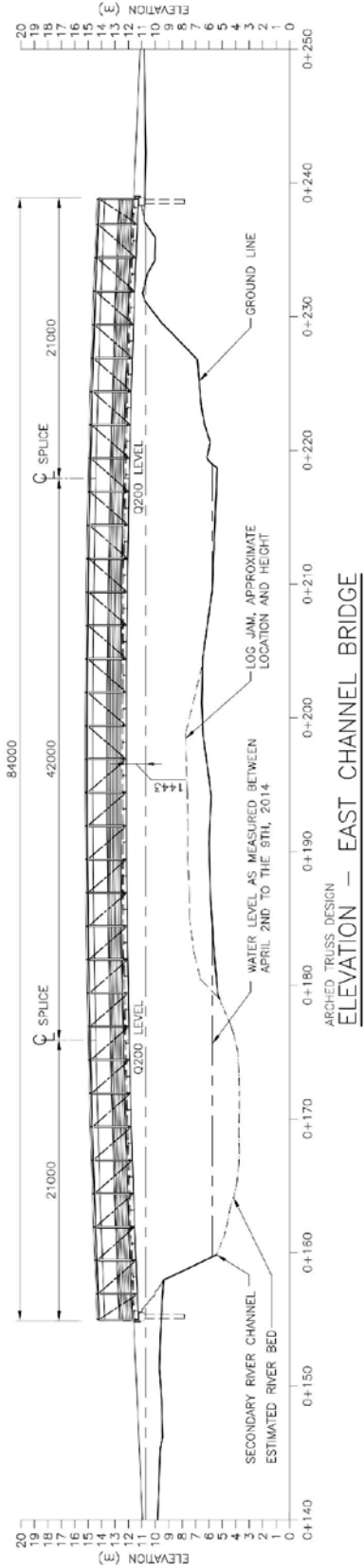
G.M. Concurrence



C.A.O. Concurrence



Appendix II – Bridge Conceptual Design



TO: Wendy Marshall
Manager of Parks Services

DATE: February 3, 2016

FROM: Joan Michel
Parks and Trails Coordinator

MEETING: RPTSC – February 16, 2016

FILE:

SUBJECT: Event Permit Framework for Mount Benson Regional Park

RECOMMENDATION

That the 2016-2021 Event Permit Framework for Mount Benson Regional Park be approved.

PURPOSE

To review the state of development at Mount Benson Regional Park (MBRP) and provide a framework to guide the permitting of community events up the mountain over the next five years.

BACKGROUND

In 2015 staff received two requests for running events in Mount Benson Regional Park. Staff identified many issues and did not approve the permit applications. The issue was discussed at the October meeting of the Regional Parks and Trails Select Committee and in November 2015 the Regional Board passed the following motion.

That this matter be referred to staff:

That the Regional District of Nanaimo not permit race requests to use the Mount Benson Regional Parks trail system at this time due to trail degradation and parking issues.

The RDN acquired MBRP in 2006 in partnership with the Nanaimo and Area Land Trust for purposes of conservation and recreation. In late 2008, work began on the park's first management plan. Following broad public consultation, the Board approved a plan that confirmed a long-term park vision for MBRP and provided development priorities and management actions for the 2010-2020 period.

A priority action identified in the MBRP management plan was to establish a public access route to the park. By 2013, agreements were concluded with the Province and the City of Nanaimo to secure the 1.8 km Witchcraft Lake Regional Trail (WLRT) including a RDN funded City-built floating boardwalk over the lake, parking area along the side of Benson View Road and a kiosk. The Regional Trail from Witchcraft Lake through the Crown woodlot to MBRP is a rough steep course rising over 400 m. The WLRT is the only public route to MBRP and the summit of Mount Benson, located outside the park. The GPS-ing of MBRP and WLRT is completed and trail signs including emergency location information installed throughout. The park conservation covenant was developed and then approved at the January 26, 2015 Regional Board Meeting.

Over the past ten years public use of this park has grown steadily attracting both residents and visitors to the area. Individual traditions of summiting Mount Benson on Mother's Day and Canada Day have become community traditions that regularly attract large numbers of hikers. Increased user demand is putting strain on the existing infrastructure including the trails and parking area. The trails are still in very rough condition and they are showing wear. The parking facility on Benson View Drive regularly overflows and additional roadside space for parking will be pursued in 2016.

The first event applications concerning MBRP, both running events, were addressed by staff in 2015. One event aimed to fundraise for Nepalese earthquake victims, and the other for African charities and Runners of Compassion. The second application looked to initiate an annual "Benson Grind" event, in the spirit of Vancouver's popular Grouse Grind course. Both applications envisaged tie-in with Westwood Lake Park, since neither MBRP nor WLRT offer suitable facilities for staging events. One application offered permitted access through private forest lands next to the Regional Park.

Staff explored event ideas with the applicants. Many issues relating to route, staging arrangements, parking, and trail condition were identified. Of greatest concern was the ability of park trails to bear up under the concentrated pounding of a running event, and the safety of runners and other trail users. With no easy resolution in sight, applicants were told in September that it would not be possible to conclude event permits in 2015.

Lessons learned by other coastal jurisdictions managing popular mountainside trails show it doesn't take long to develop significant and costly problems. The Grouse Grind was a rough wilderness trail 20 years ago with no local government investment until 2007. Now, it is a heavily managed 2.9 km one-way route up over 2000 plus engineered stone steps, open just four months of the year, serving around half a million users annually, and with an annual operating budget of approximately \$200,000. The course is one-way going up in order to eliminate the worst of foot pounding as well as to reduce congestion. The inherent fragility of the steep mountain landscape combined with wet climate makes it very difficult to maintain high-use trails on the BC coast. It doesn't take much use before a trail turns into a stream, and then a bigger stream as users try to climb around the problem.

Event permit request demand to utilize Mount Benson is growing steadily. To help ensure the sustainable development of MBRP trails for everyone over the long term, the following framework is proposed to guide Mount Benson event planning until the matter can be reviewed more thoroughly during next update of the MBRP Management Plan, due in 2020-21.

Event Permit Framework for Mount Benson Regional Park

2016-2017

- Identify a mountain event route that includes staging from Westwood Lake; makes permitted use of private forest lands on the east and south sides of MBRP; maximizes use of old logging road bed, is one-way going up and on narrow trails; and avoids heavily used trails and the WLRT to minimize impact these trails and with other park visitors.
- Evaluate MBRP trail conditions along the proposed event route and identify any works needed to stabilize trail for both general and event use, especially where there are water courses. Undertake any works as budget permits.

2017-2020

- Work with interested event applicants and the City of Nanaimo on staging one running event in 2018, ideally after summer fire season has ended and before intense fall rains start. Evaluate the impact of the completed event on MBRP trail conditions and if sustainable, permit one running event per year along the route for the next two years.

2020-2021

- Through the scheduled update of the MBRP Management Plan which includes public consultation, review park use and best management practices and set out a 10-year trail improvement plan that will support a sustainable network of trails at MBRP that can weather general use as well as a limited number of annual events.

ALTERNATIVES

1. That the 2016-2021 Event Permit Framework for Mount Benson Regional Park be approved.
2. That the 2016-2021 Event Permit Framework for Mount Benson Regional Park not be approved and alternate direction be provided.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATION

Working with event applicants, examining the existing trails and identifying route options can be carried out by parks staff with assistance of the volunteer park warden. The 2016 Regional Parks Operations budget has funds for general maintenance and development of MBRP that can be used for minor trail improvements. Any larger trail upgrades required to support events would be included in the 2017 budget.

STRATEGIC PLAN IMPLICATIONS

The Strategic Plan directs staff to develop parks and trails as guided by management plans. The 2010-2020 Management Plan for MBRP instructs the RDN to i) provide recreational and educational opportunities that are compatible with the ecological values of MBRP and its sensitive habitats, and ii) take a long-term approach to improving accessibility to the Park and its viewpoints.

SUMMARY/CONCLUSIONS

Mount Benson Regional Park was acquired in 2006 for conservation and recreation purposes. Since acquisition, multiple upgrades to the park have taken place including the creation of the Witchcraft Lake Regional Trail. Over the last 10 years use of the park has increased and the rough trails up the mountain are already showing considerable wear. Recent requests to permit running events in the park have been turned down because this additional use would unduly strain an already fragile asset, and planning and forethought are required for a safe event with minimal impact to the park and other visitors.

Evidence from other coastal jurisdictions is clear that costly trail problems take little time to develop on our wet mountainsides. A framework to guide event permitting over the 2016-2021 period is proposed that would see a sustainable event route identified with a view to limiting impact on the Regional Park while not interfering with regular use. The matter would then be reviewed as part of the next update of the park management plan, due in 2020-21.



Report Writer



Manager Concurrence



G.M. Concurrence



C.A.O. Concurrence

From: [Osborne, Tom](#)
To: [Harvey, Ann-Marie](#)
Cc: [Marshall, Wendy](#)
Subject: FW: Road Access to Mount Benson Summit
Date: Wednesday, December 16, 2015 11:50:58 AM

Ann-Marie

Can you print of the sections of the plan I note below and hand out at the RPTSC meeting.

Thanks

Tom

Tom Osborne
General Manager of Recreation and Parks Services

Regional District of Nanaimo Recreation and Parks Dept.

From: Osborne, Tom
Sent: Wednesday, December 16, 2015 11:48 AM
To: Maureen Young
Cc: Marshall, Wendy; Trudeau, Dennis; Bill Veenhof; Colin Haime
Subject: RE: Road Access to Mount Benson Summit

Maureen,

We can add the letter to the February RPTSC meeting agenda under correspondence.

In the meantime I have attached some relevant background information on the Park Management Plan which was approved by the Board.

Mount Benson Regional Park Management Plan link:
<http://rdn.bc.ca/cms/wpattachments/wpID1930atID3214.pdf>

As you will recall, there was a tremendous amount community interest and input when the plan was developed of which a park access was one of the "hot topics".

On the link above, please reference Section 5.5 Park Access (pg. 38) and 5.6 Park Accessibility (pg. 40).

Specifically to the road matter, Policy 7 in the Plan states:

“Public road access to Mount Benson Regional Park will not be actively pursued by the RDN during the term of this management plan. However, the RDN may consider proposals from private interests for road, gondola or other forms of access into the Park or to its boundaries, subject to rigorous and extensive assessment of: impacts on the environmental and visual integrity of the Park; socio economic impacts in the surrounding area; and full business case scenario planning.”

In regard to land use, all access to the park crosses either Crown Land (wood lot), private lands or private Forest lands. Therefore, if a road or other methods of access is considered, the respective players will need to be involved and in agreement. In addition the park itself will need to be developed in a manner to accommodate a wider array of users with differing levels of mobility.

Staff will be pleased to discuss further the current directives of the management plan in regard to road access at the next meeting for Committee feedback.

Regards,

Tom

Tom Osborne
General Manager of Recreation and Parks Services

Regional District of Nanaimo Recreation and Parks Dept.

From: Maureen Young [mailto:maureen_young@shaw.ca]
Sent: Wednesday, December 16, 2015 11:04 AM
To: Osborne, Tom
Cc: Marshall, Wendy; Trudeau, Dennis; Bill Veenhof; COLIN HAIME
Subject: Fwd: Road Access to Mount Benson Summit

Hi Tom

I am forwarding this email which I received, from Mr. Lord, who i met at the Morden Tipple Christmas celebration - he was quite keen on discussing how to access Mount Benson by road, which was formerly possible and asked how this could be discussed formally? Could this email be included on the next Regional Parks and Trails Committee agenda?

Thank You.

Maureen Young

Begin forwarded message:

From: "Edward & Marian Lord" <melord@shaw.ca>
Subject: Road Access to Mount Benson Summit
Date: 15 December, 2015 6:11:57 PM PST
To: <maureen_young@shaw.ca>
Cc: <bill.veenhof@shaw.ca>, <bill.mckay@nanaimo.ca>

Hello Maureen

Good talking to you the other night at the FOMM Christmas celebration.

Further to our discussion, here's some information from a guide book entitled "Milestones on Vancouver Island" by Ken Pattison published in 1973. This quote is from the revised edition dated May 1986 page 92

"Certainly the trip to the lookout on 3,366 foot Mt. Benson behind Nanaimo is a rewarding drive; for here is a majestic panoramic view of the Strait of Georgia and the mainland beyond. Inquire at the tourist office for directions."

Given our demographics, the ability to drive up year round to enjoy the view would be an asset to many in the community. It existed once and my hope is that it could be re-established. Also from a tourist perspective, it would be an obvious benefit.

An example not too far away is Moran State Park, Washington where one can drive up to the viewpoint on Mount Constitution – the highest point in the San Juan Islands
<http://moranstatepark.com/park-map/>

I would appreciate you bringing this email to the attention of the Regional District of Nanaimo Board of Directors for their consideration.

Thanks

Ted Lord
6379 Groveland Drive
Nanaimo
BC V9V 1P5

250 390 0511

the claim holder's proposed activities well in advance of those activities.

Action 5.1: Negotiate with the current mineral claim holder to remove the existing mineral claim within Mount Benson Regional Park.

5.5 PARK ACCESSES

The Issue:

All trails leading into the Park lie across Crown (from Witchcraft Lake or from Jameson Road across the VIU woodlot) or private lands (from Westwood Lake across Island Timberlands property; or from forest service roads on Island Timberlands and TimberWest properties). A short portion of the trail access from Witchcraft Lake also crosses the south ends of two residential lots. In other words, there are no official *public* access points to the Park property.

Lack of parking is an additional issue at the trailhead at Witchcraft Lake. 'No Parking' signs have been erected at the end of Benson View Road to make sure that the turnaround is left free and driveways of local residences are not blocked. However, on busy weekends, the road can become clogged with parked cars and the vehicle frequency can be disruptive to this quiet neighbourhood.

Policy 6:

The RDN will work with neighbouring landowners to formalize main access routes to the Park, for public use as well as for park maintenance and emergency access.

Action 6.1: Work with VIU and the Province to establish formal trail accesses to the Park from Witchcraft Lake and from Jameson Road.

VIU recently received formal approval from the BC Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Arts to construct and maintain a recreational trail on Woodlot Licence 0020 between Witchcraft Lake and the Park, under the authority of sec.57 of the Forest and Range Practices Act. Permission was granted under the following conditions (B. Ostrand, Woodlands Manager, VIU: pers. comm.):

- The trail is constructed and maintained to minimize erosion resulting from trail use.

- The trail is open to the public and there are no restrictions on use of the trail.
- There is no restriction on other resources uses (such as forest harvesting) inherent in this authority.
- Good communication is maintained between VIU and the RDN to ensure coordination of trail management.

VIU also recognizes that much of the trail off Jamieson Road follows an old logging road, which VIU intends to rehabilitate in some 5-10 years (*ibid.*).



Steep trails in Mt. Benson Regional Park.

Action 6.2: Complete an agreement with Island Timberlands and the City of Nanaimo to establish long-term trail access to the Park from Westwood Lake across Island Timberlands property.

Although the City of Nanaimo is agreeable to the use of Westwood Lake as a trailhead, neither the City nor the RDN can legally establish and sign trails that travel over private forest land. The existing informal trails from Westwood Lake travel through recently cleared areas and logging roads on Island Timberlands property, making the route to the Park difficult to find for those unfamiliar with the area.

- Trail location, design standards, construction, signage and maintenance responsibilities will be part of all trail access agreements.

Action 6.3: Work with the City and the Ministry of Transportation and in consultation with local residents and the public on an appropriate location or locations for parking near the Witchcraft Lake trailhead. In partnership with the City, design and construct parking areas.

The RDN has initiated discussions with the City of Nanaimo and the Ministry of Transportation to find better parking near the Witchcraft Lake trailhead. Ongoing planning and design will involve the residents along Benson View Road. Refer to Section 5.9: Visitor Facilities for details on development of a trailhead area at Witchcraft Lake.

Action 6.4: Work with the City of Nanaimo and neighbouring private land owners near Witchcraft Lake to resolve the existing trail routing over private property.

This should be resolved in concert with Action 6.3 to determine the appropriate parking and trailhead location.

5.6 PARK ACCESSIBILITY

The Issue:

Currently, the Park can be legally accessed only via the trail system on foot or bicycle; all roads that lead to the Park are gated private forest service roads and not open to the public. The trails to the Park are steep and rugged, limiting access by the physically challenged, elderly, very young or those not otherwise able to undertake the steep hike. Hence, only those with the physical ability and desire can technically access the Park and enjoy the views from the summit.

Some long-time residents have fond memories of the days prior to the 1970s when the road to the fire tower allowed anyone with an adequate vehicle to drive to the summit of Mount Benson. Several survey respondents and participants at the public sessions indicated a strong desire to see some form of access to the Park reinstated so that people of all ages and varying levels of physical ability can enjoy the Park. There are also economic benefits that could be enjoyed in the community by offering the mountaintop views as a visitor and tourist attraction.

Several paragliders and hang-gliders indicated their interest in using the summit of Mount Benson as a launch point. A requirement for this would be access to a road as well as a constructed launch.

There was also a strong public voice from those concerned about preserving the wilderness character of the Park. Roads, gondolas, or railway lines could negatively impact sensitive ecosystems in terms of their respective footprints and the greatly increased foot traffic, particularly at the summit. There are concerns about the effect of increased noise on wildlife and the existing 'peace and quiet' of the mountain and the Park, as well as visual impacts of a gondola or railway line up the highly visible north side of the mountain. Access by mechanical means could also negate the sense of accomplishment achieved from summiting the mountain, and some respondents opined that a road or gondola would be just a foot in the door to commercialization of the Park or summit.



The Grouse Gondola.



Narrow-gauge railway in Snowdon Park (Wales)

During the course of the planning process, several forms of access to the Park were discussed, including:

- **Road** – based on reinstating the remnant service road that winds up the east and south sides of the mountain or the construction of a new road to its summit. According to a property appraisal completed in 2006, the estimated cost of extending a public road to the Park property would be in the range of \$1.5 million plus right-of-way negotiation costs. Given its responsibilities and priorities for the entire regional parks and trails system, this would not represent wise use of the RDN’s limited park management budget.
- **Gondola** – public response on this idea was split with interests both strongly for and against indicated at the public sessions and in the survey.
- **Narrow-gauge railway** – proposed in the past up the north side of the mountain.

As indicated in the RDN Regional Parks and Trails Plan, although the RDN will strive to provide “opportunities to all RDN residents to access and enjoy regional parks and trails”, this may be constrained by topography, environmental values, cultural/historic sensitivities and cost.

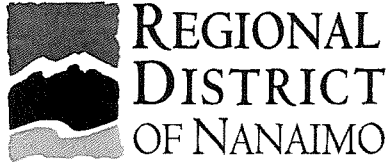
In the case of Mount Benson Regional Park, these factors are compounded by the private ownership of surrounding lands, all of which severely limit opportunities to undertake major access upgrades in the short-term – i.e., within the timeframe of this Plan. However, as the RDN and Nanaimo area continue to develop, future opportunities to improve access to the Park could arise from private or community interests and may warrant consideration.



Hiking in the Park.

Policy 7: ●●

Public road access to Mount Benson Regional Park will not be actively pursued by the RDN during the term of this management plan. However, the RDN may consider proposals from private interests for road, gondola or other forms of access into the Park or to its boundaries, subject to rigorous and extensive assessment of: impacts on the environmental and visual integrity of the Park; socio-economic impacts in the surrounding area; and full business-case scenario planning.



RDN REPORT	
CAO APPROVAL	✓
EAP	
COW	✓
JAN 27 2016	
RHD	
BOARD	

STAFF REPORT

TO: Wendy Marshall
 Manager of Parks Services

DATE: January 25, 2016

FROM: Joan Michel
 Parks and Trails Coordinator

MEETING: CoW – February 9, 2016

FILE:

SUBJECT: Coombs to Parksville Rail Trail Project Update

RECOMMENDATION

That staff proceed to tender for the Station Rd. to Church Rd. phase of the Coombs to Parksville Rail Trail with a tender upgrade for the Church Rd to City of Parksville phase.

PURPOSE

To review the Coombs to Parksville Rail Trail project planning and funding, and reconfirm advancement to tender with a tender upgrade.

BACKGROUND

In 2009, the RDN undertook a rail trail feasibility study of over 100 km of E&N rail corridor within the Region. Rough cost estimates for rail trail development were obtained. Those estimates underpinned the Board’s May 2013 earmarking of \$2.6 million in Federal gas tax money (Regionally Significant Projects) for the planning and development of the RDN’s first Rail Trail projects: Parksville to French Creek and Coombs to Parksville. A contract was let in April 2014 for the engineered design of a 3 m wide multi-use accessible gravel trail with road and rail crossings, in addition to detailed cost estimation and tender document preparation.

In June 2015, staff updated the Board on the Rail Trail project planning and provided revised cost estimates based on 75 per cent completed design work. The Board was advised that project scope would need to be scaled down considerably given the budget. The Board agreed that the Parksville to French Creek stretch should be put on hold and focus placed on the 7 km link between Coombs and Parksville. Since the \$2.6 million in regional gas tax money would not likely be sufficient to pay for the whole Coombs to Parksville route, the Board authorized staff to proceed with a tender for the phase that could be supported with already committed funds and simultaneously issue a tender upgrade for the remaining phase. The second phase would be developed should additional gas tax money and Regional Parks capital funds be made available.

In the fall of 2015, given essential completion of Coombs to Parksville design, the Rail Trail project entered the approval stage. Detailed design packages were submitted to the Province (MoTI and MFLNRO), RDN Strategic and Community Development Services, the Agricultural Land Commission, the

Island Corridor Foundation (ICF) and Southern Railway of Vancouver Island (SVI). A proposed Memorandum of Understanding with ICF was developed to address deferred compliance with federal transport regulations on the inactive Alberni Line (see E&N Rail Trail – Deferred Road Crossing Compliance Staff Report, January 25, 2016). Requisite approvals from the Province, Development Services and the ALC have been received and work nears completion on approvals by SVI and ICF.

Over the fall of 2015, staff also worked with the City of Parksville on the design and development of a short stretch of Rail Trail situated within the City of Parksville’s Springwood Park. This Park will stand as the eastern trailhead for the Coombs to Parksville Rail Trail, as well as for the Top Bridge to Parksville Rail Trail that the City expects to build on top of planned waterworks infrastructure.

In late November 2015, staff issued a Request for Qualifications for the Coombs to Parksville tender/tender upgrade. Nine compliant submissions were received and evaluated, and in January 2016 five firms were notified that they have been pre-qualified to participate in the tender/tender upgrade process. In alphabetical order, the successful firms are: Bowerman Excavating Ltd., Copcan Civil Ltd., Knappett Industries (2006) Ltd., David Stalker Excavating Ltd., and Windley Contracting Ltd.

Total Coombs to Parksville Rail Trail planning and development costs for a gravel-surfaced 3 m wide 7 km long accessible multi-use trail are estimated to fall in the \$3M to \$4M range. The primary funding source for the project remains Regional Gas Tax money (\$2.6M). In addition, Community Works Funds (\$400,000 from Electoral Area F and \$125,000 from Electoral Area G) can be made available for the project along with \$671,700 in Regional Parks capital funds.

The competitive bidding through the tender/tender-upgrade process will provide actual trail development costs and staff will return to the Board in late March with a recommended development plan that meets the available budget.

It is noted that there are a number of trail design factors that can be adjusted to bring project costs down and staff will be working through the tender process to identify a feasible and affordable final design plan for Coombs to Parksville Rail Trail.

ALTERNATIVES

1. That staff proceed to tender for the Station Rd to Church Rd phase of the Coombs to Parksville Rail Trail with a tender upgrade for the Church Rd to City of Parksville phase.
2. Provide alternate direction to staff.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Regionally Significant Projects Funds (Federal Gas Tax) in the amount of \$2.6 million are committed to the Rail Trail project. Electoral Area F and G Community Works Funds (CWF) in the amounts of \$400,000 and \$125,000 respectively are available for commitment to the Rail Trail project, along with \$671,717 in 2016-2020 provisionally approved Regional Parks Capital funds, for a total available project budget of approximately \$3.8 million. Final commitment of CWF and Regional Parks Capital funds will take place in association with approval of final development plan and construction contracts for the Rail Trail, anticipated to be placed before the Board in late March 2016.

Maintenance of the Rail Trail, including annual spot repair of gravel surfacing, redressing every 10 – 15 years and, should the Alberni Line become active, compliant road crossing infrastructure, will be covered through annual Regional Parks budgets and long-term asset management planning.

STRATEGIC PLAN IMPLICATIONS

A Regional Trail connecting urban Oceanside with the long-standing well-recognized tourist hub of Coombs will provide a viable active transportation corridor for both residents and visitors alike. Active transportation infrastructure is key to reducing people’s reliance on vehicle transit and achieving healthy lifestyles. The primary reason visitors come to Vancouver Island is to enjoy the outdoors, and demand for places to walk, cycle and run while they explore the mid-Island area is high. Residents of Oceanside seek the ability to leave home for a walk, cycle or run without having to get in a car. Just as the Galloping Goose in Victoria has helped to revolutionize commuting and transit patterns in that centre, so will the Regional Trail help open up possibilities for residents of Areas F, G, Parksville and Qualicum Beach in particular to start making the change from fossil fuel driven transit to human powered transit as they move around within their communities.

SUMMARY/CONCLUSIONS

The Coombs to Parksville Rail Trail Project is in final stage of design approval. A Request for Qualifications process has identified five interested firms ready to participate in the tender/tender upgrade for Rail Trail development to the City of Parksville boundary. General arrangements have been made with the City of Parksville for the design and development of the short piece of Rail Trail situated within the City (Springwood Park trailhead). Estimated total project costs for planning and development of the entire Coombs to Parksville Rail Trail range from \$3M to \$4M. Project funding consists of \$2.6 million in committed gas tax money, with approximately \$1.2 million in Community Work Funds and Regional Parks Capital funds available to be committed to the project once the tender/tender upgrade process has clarified a feasible and affordable design and construction plan.



Report Writer



Manager Concurrence



G.M. Concurrence



C.A.O. Concurrence