

REGIONAL DISTRICT OF NANAIMO

ELECTORAL AREA 'A' PARKS, RECREATION AND CULTURE COMMISSION

REGULAR MEETING

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 21ST, 2016

7:00 PM

(Cedar Heritage Centre)

A D D E N D U M

PAGES

REPORTS

2-4 Salish Sea Marine Trail Proposal BC Marine Trails Network Association Report

Motion to receive Report

TO: Wendy Marshall
Manager of Parks Services

DATE: August 29, 2016

FROM: Joan Michel
Parks and Trails Coordinator

MEETING: RPTSC – September 20, 2016

FILE:

SUBJECT: Salish Sea Marine Trail Proposal from BC Marine Trails Network Association

RECOMMENDATION

1. That the Board direct staff to continue to show support for the concept of marine trails and recognize paddlers as a stakeholder group when undertaking park planning.
2. That the Board direct staff to work with the BC Marine Trails Network Association on developing for Board approval a partnership agreement that establishes Descanso Bay Regional Park as a Salish Sea Marine Trail camping site, and the Nelson Road Boat Launch (Area A) and Blueback Community Park (Area E) as Salish Sea Marine Trail access points, and provides for continuing site assessment and potential expansion of RDN park and water access sites to be included in BC marine trails.

PURPOSE

To review the BC Marine Trails Network Association’s proposed Salish Sea Marine Trail and partnership proposal.

BACKGROUND

The BC Marine Trails Network Association (BCMTNA) is a registered non-profit society comprised of ten paddling clubs and numerous individuals and businesses located on Vancouver Island, the Gulf Islands and the lower Mainland. The BCMTNA launched its first network of trails for paddlers, the Gulf Island Marine Trail, in 2011. At that time, the trail involved 27 existing waterfront parks, campgrounds and access sites from Island View Beach Regional Park (CRD) in the south to Newcastle Island (BC Parks) and Descanso Bay Regional Park on Gabriola (RDN).

In the following years, the BCMTNA’s web page map revealed additional sites stretching up and around Vancouver Island. Additional sites within the Regional District ranged from private waterfront lands like Nanoose’s Schooner Cove Marina and the Qualicum First Nation’s Big Qualicum River Campground to MoTI water accesses such as the Nelson Road Boat Launch (Area A community park facility at the water access) and Buccaneer Beach (Area H). One RDN community park, Blueback (Area E), is shown on the BCMTNA map.

Participation in the Gulf Island Marine Trail and inclusion of other sites like the Nelson Road Boat Launch and Blueback on the BCMTNA map have not involved extra work on the part of the RDN. Descanso Bay Regional Park and the Nelson Road Boat Launch already serve the paddling community. Blueback is currently being improved as a paddler’s access point.

Aside from the BCMTNA web site, there has until recently been no obvious promotion of the Gulf Island Marine Trail or the Marine Trail concept, at least in the mid-Island area. The Descanso Bay Regional Park brochure includes a note about the Marine Trail and provides a web address. No dedicated signage was ever developed by the Association to mark marine trail sites, and the RDN was not contacted again by the BCMTNA until the spring of 2016.

The BCMTNA is now rejuvenating and looking to develop an association with the Trans Canada Trail in order to help build recognition of existing marine trail networks and advance the overall concept. Since the TCT is focused on one linear cross-country connection, the BCMTNA has conceived the Salish Sea Marine Trail – termed a ‘blueway’ as opposed to a network – to complement the land-based Victoria to Nanaimo to Vancouver stretch of the TCT. At the June 26, 2016 Regional Board meeting, BCMTNA Acting Project Manager John Kimantas briefed members on marine trails and requested that the RDN partner in the Salish Sea Marine Trail initiative. Subsequently, Staff obtained further information from the Association on its status, goals and Salish Sea Marine Trail partnership proposal in particular.

At this time, the BCMTNA is actively identifying camping and access sites for the Salish Sea Marine Trail which involves Electoral Areas A, B and E. While Association members are still out scouting, no RDN regional or community sites other than existing BCMTNA identified access points Nelson Road Boat Launch and Blueback Community Park and camping site Descanso Bay Regional Park are considered suitable for inclusion in the proposed Salish Sea Marine Trail. Moorecroft Regional Park was examined but found wanting as an access point at low tide. Similarly, Beachcomber Regional Park is not particularly suitable as an access for paddlers. It is too early to determine the status of Electoral Area E’s new Oak Leaf Drive Community Park. There are no additional RDN park possibilities along the Cedar waterfront at this time, and none required on Gabriola Island for the Salish Sea Marine Trail.

The current BCMTNA organization is intent on creating formal partnership agreements with those who own or manage the access and camping sites shown on its public maps. They have no agreement template developed as yet and continue to work out what might be required. The Association is also concerned with ensuring that paddlers’ interests be taken into consideration by local government in general park planning. They are proposing establishment of a marine trail advisory panel. It has been made clear to the Association that inclusion of a site in a BCMTNA marine trail requires agreement by the relevant landowner or manager.

ALTERNATIVES

1. That the Board direct staff to recognize paddlers as stakeholders in park planning, and work with the BC Marine Trail Network Association on formalizing the inclusion of select RDN owned or managed parks and water accesses in marine trails and, specifically, in the Salish Sea Marine Trail.
2. That the Board direct staff not to formalize any participation in the BC marine trail network and alternate direction be provided.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The BCMTNA has been encouraged to produce some signage at their cost, similar to what the Trans Canada Trail organization provides for participating trail organizations. At present, there are no costs associated with pursuing the proposed marine trail initiative aside from staff time. To the extent that the Salish Sea Marine Trail is incorporated into the Trans Canada Trail, some minor event-related costs may arise during 2017 in order for the RDN to participate in the Canada-wide celebrations.

STRATEGIC PLAN IMPLICATIONS

The Salish Sea represents a significant recreational playground for the Regional District. Kayaking is a growth sport and leisure past-time that features highly now in eco-tourism development. Formally extending trail planning work at the RDN to include marine as well as land-based trails will help the RDN maximize its tourism potential as well as clarify ocean frontage resources and development for residents.

SUMMARY/CONCLUSIONS

The BC Marine Trail Network Association wishes to engage with the Regional District in the formal planning and establishment of marine trail access and camping sites. Specifically, the Association wishes to conclude a Salish Sea Marine Trail in association with the Trans Canada Trail and in time for the national trail's 25th anniversary in 2017. Three long-standing waterfront RDN park sites, the Nelson Road Boat Launch (Area A), Descanso Bay Regional Park (Area B) and Blueback Community Park (Area E), are well situated to be formally recognized as part of a marine trail network. No additional work is required to perform as a marine trail site, though installation of Association-produced signage is recommended. Staff have provided initial feedback to the Association on a draft partnership agreement but more work will be required to achieve a useful document.



Report Writer



Manager Concurrence



GM Concurrence



A/C.A.O. Concurrence