

# Royal Oak Golf Course Lands



## Interim Management Guidelines

Capital Regional District | July 2024



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# 1. Context

## 1.1 Background

The Capital Regional District (CRD) purchased the 10.92-hectare (27-acre) former Royal Oak Golf Course property (the property) on October 31, 2023. The property is located within the District of Saanich and the traditional territory of multiple First Nations who have stewarded the land since time immemorial (Map 1). Uniquely situated adjacent to Elk/Beaver Lake Regional Park, Saanich Commonwealth Place and several multi-family residential developments, the property holds value as a public outdoor recreation area and serves as a linkage to other regional green spaces and community facilities.

The property was most recently operated as a private golf course, which closed in 2017. It has remained vacant since, with the exception of some informal recreational use of the grounds by the public and a private golf business operating from the former clubhouse building. Preexisting facilities include the clubhouse building, adjacent parking lot and workshop, a series of pathways connecting the former fairways, four constructed ponds, and a number of tone poles or “tonals” (vertical metal cylinders used as targets) that were recently set up by disc golf players. Current public recreational uses include walking, running, dog walking, disc golf and cycling.

The property is located within the Coastal Douglas-fir Moist Maritime Biogeoclimatic Zone and includes areas of woodland, open fields, wetlands, and several mature trees that support a variety of bird species. Observations have confirmed the presence of the threatened Pacific Coast population of western painted turtle (*Chrysemys picta bellii*) within the property. Critical habitat has been federally designated for this population and it is protected under the *Species at Risk Act (2021)*. The property falls within the Normandy Creek sub-watershed, which drains into the Colquitz River watershed, an important river system supporting native salmon and trout species. Additional research is needed to fully understand the property’s ecological values, including an assessment of ecosystem restoration opportunities, and verifying the presence and critical habitat of known and potential species at risk.

Under Saanich’s *Official Community Plan Bylaw 2023*, the eastern portion of the property is within an Urban Containment Boundary and designated as Neighbourhood, while the remainder of the property is designated as Rural Areas. Under Saanich’s *Zoning Bylaw 2003*, the entire property is zoned Recreation and Open Space (P-4). The majority of the property is additionally within BC’s Agricultural Land Reserve.

## 1.2 First Nations Reconciliation

Reconciliation Goal 1, within the *Regional Parks and Trails Strategic Plan 2022-2032* (Strategic Plan), is to pursue “Strong, collaborative and mutually beneficial relationships with First Nations through

working in partnership.” Priority action 1-1a within the Strategic Plan supports this goal and sets out that the CRD will “Work collaboratively with First Nations to develop and implement priority initiatives related to regional parks and regional trails, such as: Involving First Nations in land acquisition and park management planning and operations.”

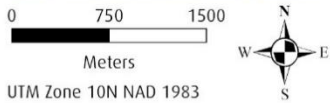
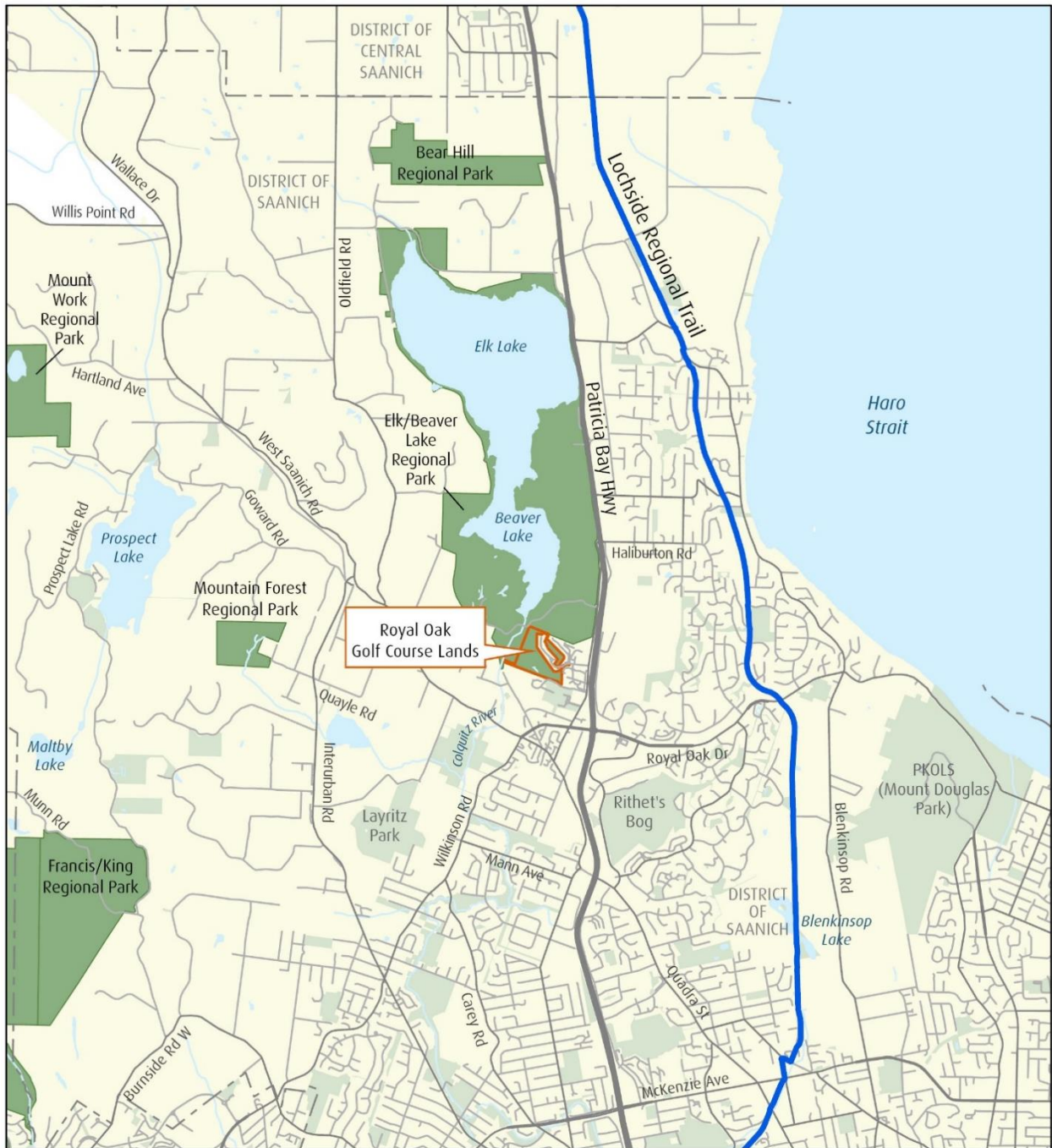
Six First Nations governments were identified as having asserted Territory over the property. These include the x̄sepsum (Esquimalt Nation), BOKÉCEN (Pauquachin First Nation), Songhees Nation, WJOLÉLP (Tsartlip First Nation), S̄ÁUTW (Tsawout First Nation) and the W̄SIKEM (Tseycum First Nation). Conversations between the CRD and these Nations began during the land acquisition process to advise them of the purchase and to begin to understand their interests in the property. The MÁLEXEŁ (Malahat First Nation) more recently expressed interest in the acquisition and has since been included in the conversations. CRD staff will continue engaging with First Nations, during the lifespan of this Interim Management Guidelines (IMG) and beyond, to identify and pursue opportunities that respect and support First Nations’ self-determination.

### 1.3 Purpose & Connection to the Parkland Acquisition & Management Planning Processes

The CRD’s *Land Acquisition Strategy 2020 to 2021* guided the identification of the property as a desirable addition to the regional parks and trails system and the CRD’s Land Acquisition Fund was used to facilitate its purchase. The land acquisition process involved assessing the property for conformance with a wide range of criteria, discussions with the property owner, notifying relevant First Nations governments and obtaining approval from the CRD Board.

The purpose of this IMG document is to guide how CRD staff will operate the property while discussions with First Nations are ongoing and in the absence of a park management plan. This includes providing guidance on site securement and how the property is to be utilized on an interim basis. It further guides building relationships and gathering information needed to inform a management planning process.

Once land from the property has been included within an approved park management plan, the IMG will no longer be used to manage the property. The development of a park management plan is a multi-year process which involves extensive First Nations, stakeholder and public engagement, and approval by the CRD Board. CRD staff have refrained from determining whether any land from the property should be added to Elk/Beaver Lake Regional Park while discussions with First Nations are ongoing. Once First Nations interests are understood, CRD staff will determine whether land from the property should be added to Elk/Beaver Lake Regional Park or if it should be used to create a new regional park. If land from the property is added to Elk/Beaver Lake Regional Park, an updated management plan will be developed, which will establish management directions for that park. If land from the property is used to establish a new stand-alone regional park, a new management plan will be developed for the new park with unique management direction.



**Important** This map is for general information purposes only. The Capital Regional District (CRD) makes no representations or warranties regarding the accuracy or completeness of this map or the suitability of the map for any purpose. **This map is not for navigation.** The CRD will not be liable for any damage, loss or injury resulting from the use of the map or information on the map and the map may be changed by the CRD at any time.

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- Royal Oak Golf Course Lands
- Regional Park
- Other Park / Protected Area
- Lochside Regional Trail

- Lake / Ocean
- Creek / River
- Municipal Boundary
- Highway
- Major Road
- Minor Road

Capital Regional District

Royal Oak Golf Course Lands

Map 1: Local Context



## 2. Park Classification

The Strategic Plan establishes a park classification system that is used to assign each regional park one of four classifications based on the intended management outcome. No classification will be assigned to the property while the IMG is in place. The classification will be determined through the future development of the park management plan once more is known about the property and First Nations interests are understood.

## 3. Interim Park Management Goals

The following interim park management goals are applicable to all park acquisitions and establish the outcomes of implementing the IMG to help to prioritize efforts and resources. They are intended to provide the necessary groundwork for securing the site and undertaking the future development of a park management plan.

- 1** **Build Relationships**  
Identify First Nations, local governments, partners, and stakeholders interested in the management of the property and develop working relationships to identify shared goals and future opportunities for collaboration.
- 2** **Gather Information**  
Gather baseline archaeological, cultural heritage, ecological, outdoor recreation and infrastructure information to identify park values and priorities to be included within a future park management plan.
- 3** **Protect Park Values**  
Conduct site securement, including addressing interim operational, cultural, conservation and outdoor recreation needs, to protect park values.

## 4. Interim Management Actions

The following table outlines a series of interim management actions that will guide the operation of the property over the lifespan of the IMG.

Interim Management Actions	Timing
<b>Reconciliation</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Work with interested First Nations to gain an understanding of the property's values, including areas, features and/or species of cultural significance</li> </ul>	Ongoing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Determine the environmental, social, cultural, or economic interests in the property of interested First Nations</li> </ul>	Short-term
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Complete an archaeological assessment to determine the archaeological potential of the property and document evidence of past human activity</li> </ul>	Short-term
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify opportunities to partner with First Nations to undertake conservation and restoration projects aimed at protecting and strengthening cultural values that could be included as actions within a future park management plan</li> </ul>	Long-term
<b>Conservation</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Inventory and monitor ecological values and recreational use impacts within the property, assess potential threats and implement necessary mitigation measures</li> </ul>	Ongoing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Implement the impact assessment process and use best management practices, as needed, to mitigate potential impacts on the natural environment</li> </ul>	Ongoing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify and manage property encroachments</li> </ul>	Ongoing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Undertake actions to mitigate potential impacts to known ecological values, including critical habitat and species at risk occurrences based on the current use of the property</li> </ul>	Short-term
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify, assess, and remediate sources of environmental contamination and degradation from former land use</li> </ul>	Short-term
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Complete an assessment of priority invasive species within the property and identify and implement appropriate management actions</li> </ul>	Short-term
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Complete an initial ecological impact assessment of the existing disc golf use on the property and amend the current use, as needed, to mitigate negative impacts to known ecological values, including western painted turtle critical habitat</li> </ul>	Short-term
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Complete a full ecological inventory and impact assessment to document all ecological values, including species at risk, and identify potential threats, mitigation options and restoration opportunities</li> </ul>	Short-term
<b>Visitor Experience</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify and mitigate visitor safety hazards</li> </ul>	Ongoing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Document visitor-use patterns to better understand recreation potential</li> </ul>	Ongoing

- Public access to the property will be provided from the adjacent Elk/Beaver Lake Regional Park, which provides appropriate visitor amenities as a primary access node Ongoing
- No new public vehicle or bicycle parking, toilets, benches, or garbage cans will be provided within the property—existing facilities at the adjacent Filter Beds and Beaver Lake main parking lots at Elk/Beaver Lake Regional Park will serve visitors Ongoing
- Maintain existing established trails that provide circulation within the property and access from the adjacent Elk/Beaver Lake Regional Park as hiking trails Ongoing
- Under the CRD’s *Dog Management Policy Framework*, dogs may be off leash but must remain under effective control at all times Ongoing
- Enforce *Capital Regional District Parks Regulation Bylaw No. 1, 2018* Ongoing
- Install minimal infrastructure needed to secure the site Short-term
- Prepare an interim sign plan to guide the installation of necessary orientation and basic park regulation signage at key trail accesses and intersections Short-term
- Provide information on the CRD’s website informing the public of what outdoor recreational opportunities are available on the property in the interim and what visitor amenities can be expected Short-term
- Visitor access to the clubhouse building and adjacent parking lot will be restricted while the future use of this area is being considered Short-term
- Following an initial impact assessment and implementing priority impact mitigation measures, consider entering a license agreement with an established recreation group to operate the disc golf course on a short-term basis Short-term
- Reevaluate the disc golf license agreement once a full ecological inventory and impact assessment is complete and amend the agreement, as necessary, to protect ecological values, including critical habitat for species at risk. Medium-term

### Climate Action & Resiliency

- Identify opportunities to mitigate climate change, including facilitating active transportation to and from the property and improving natural atmospheric carbon sequestration on site that could be included as actions within a future park management plan Long-term
- Identify opportunities to adapt to climate change, including identifying natural hazards to and from the property and necessary mitigation measures that could be included as actions within a future park management plan Long-term

### Access & Equity

- Work with partners to identify accessibility and equity barriers and opportunities for improvement that could be included as actions within a future park management plan Ongoing



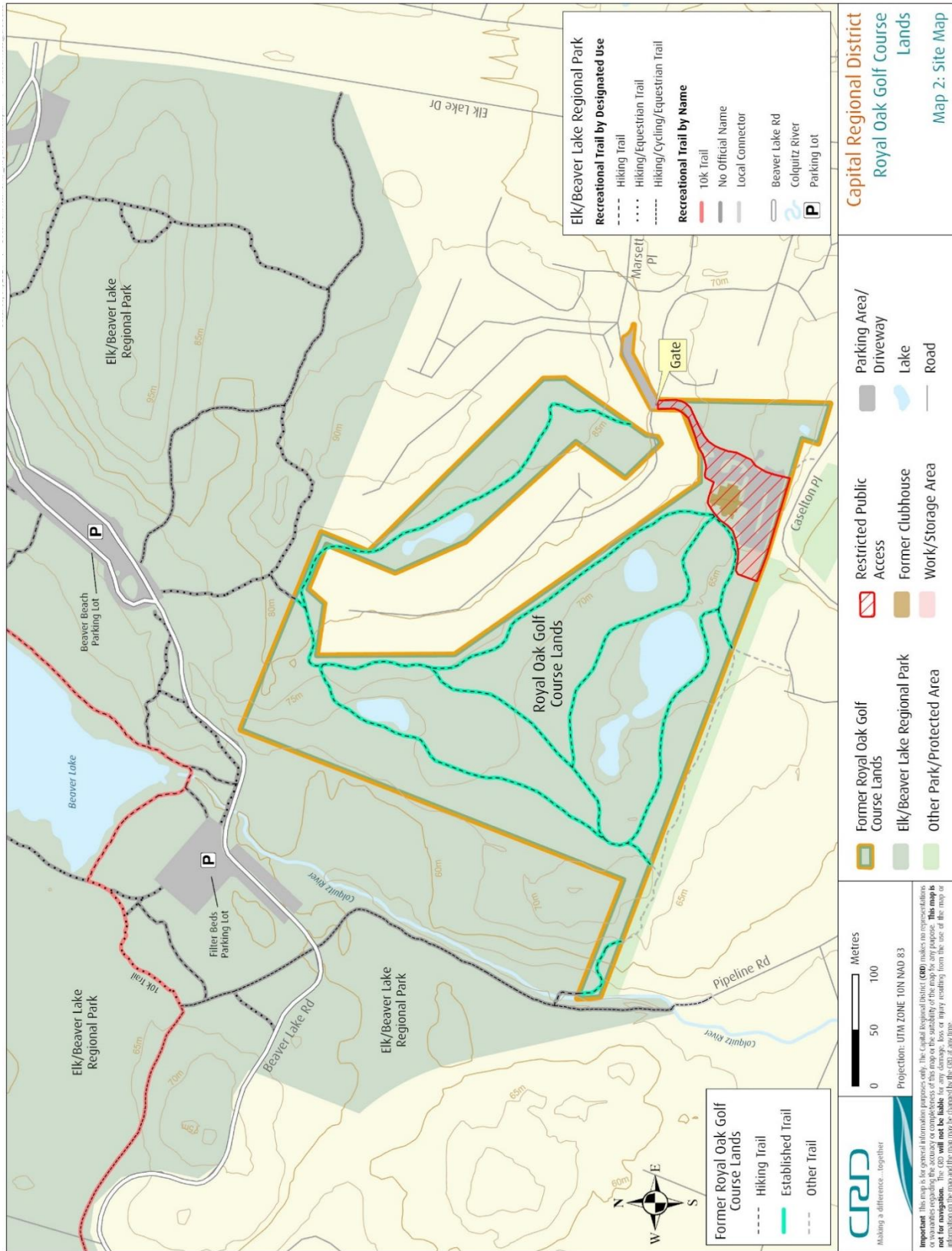
## 5. Implementation Strategy

### 5.1 Interim Development Concept

The Interim Development Concept establishes the location of key infrastructure and visitor amenities that will be available while the IMG is in place (Map 2). It should be noted that this concept is temporary and subject to change once First Nations interests are understood and a determination is made about whether land from the property should be added to Elk/Beaver Lake Regional Park or become a new regional park. If land from the property is added to the Elk/Beaver Lake Regional Park, an updated development concept will be prepared during the preparation of the new management plan for the park. If the land from the property is to become a new regional park, a final development concept will be prepared as part of the management plan for the park. The management planning process will include opportunities for the public and First Nations to provide feedback on the development concept, including on what park infrastructure and visitor amenities are included. The types of infrastructure and resources dedicated to installation during the IMG stage are, therefore, very limited and selected accordingly.

### 5.2 Monitoring and Review

At the beginning of each year, CRD staff will prepare an annual operating plan (AOP) for the property, which will outline the interim management actions that are to be completed within the property over the year, including estimated timelines and required resources. Monitoring of the implementation status of the IMG will occur during the preparation of the AOP and will provide an opportunity for staff to review implementation progress, identify outstanding management actions or new actions that are to be completed, and evaluate the success of completed or ongoing management actions.



Map 2: Site Map