



regional parks strategic plan | **2012—2021**





ALBERT HEAD LAGOON REGIONAL PARK - *Sun briefly shines through the clouds at Albert Head Lagoon in Victoria.*

PHOTO BY: Bryn Tassell  
FLICKR PROFILE: Bryn Tassell

ON THE FRONT COVER:  
LONE TREE HILL REGIONAL PARK - *The hilltop is an excellent spot for birdwatching. Look for bald eagles, red-tailed hawks and turkey vultures riding the thermals overhead.*

PHOTO BY: Rachel Grigg  
FLICKR PROFILE: Ray L G

At the Capital Regional District (CRD) we are proud to support the local arts, and we are pleased to feature local photographers in many of our Regional Parks documents. For more community sourced images of our beautiful regional parks, visit our Flickr photo group **Regional Parks Photography in the Capital Regional District** and feel free to add your own photographs taken in any regional park.

**The Regional Parks  
Strategic Plan 2012-2021  
replaces the 2000 CRD  
Parks Master Plan.**

PACIFIC TREE FROG

PHOTO BY: Minette Layne

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# citizen advisory panel

The CRD Board approved the Terms of Reference for the preparation of the Regional Parks Strategic Plan in May 2009. The Terms of Reference included the establishment of a Citizen Advisory Panel (CAP). The purpose of the CAP is to provide advice to the Regional Parks Committee on the preparation of the Regional Parks 2012—2021 Strategic Plan and to recommend a Regional Parks Strategic Plan to the Regional Parks Committee.

This Strategic Plan represents the work of the members including:

## **Current Members**

Dave Chater (chair)

Maleea Acker (vice-chair)

John Chapman

Jenny Clark

Timothy Conlin

Dustin Creviston

Jeffrey Doyle

Marnie Essery

Deanna Henry

Jim Knock

James MacPherson

Bob Peart

Steven Peterson

Paul Reeve



GREATER YELLOWLEGS SANDPIPER - *This sandpiper sports its characteristic long yellow legs and long bill with slight upward curve in the tidal mud flats of Albert Head Lagoon.*

PHOTO BY: Julie Macdonald  
FLICKR PROFILE: TT\_MAC

## foreword

As highlighted in the draft Strategic Plan, the volunteer Citizen Advisory Panel (CAP) and the majority of the public felt that Regional Parks is on the right path and nature protection and conserving biodiversity should be Regional Parks' top priority. The vision presented in this plan envisions regional parks and trails becoming a part of a larger integrated system of natural lands. An expanded regional parks and trails system would be a core part of this larger conservation vision, but would require a sustained commitment by the CRD and a

wide range of private and public partners to realize this ambitious and achievable objective.

While the CAP heard from the majority of the public that nature protection is the top priority for Regional Parks, we also heard that parks and trails have immense health benefits and are integral to both the ecological health of the region and to human health and wellness. The emphasis on healthy ecosystems and correspondingly to human health has taken a higher profile in people's minds, particularly since the development of the 2000 Parks Master

Plan. The increased importance of ecological health and associated human health is woven into the goals and strategic priorities in the draft plan.

Much as the Sea to Sea Greenbelt Strategy and the Galloping Goose Regional Trail over 20 years ago helped define this region, we are now at another critical juncture in this region's evolution. If we are to sustain the diverse ecosystem and plentiful outdoor recreation opportunities that this region is blessed with well into the future, bold and innovative actions need to be taken.

The CAP feels that this Strategic Plan provides an initial "roadmap" for Regional Parks and the CRD towards this larger vision.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "G. David Chater". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large, sweeping flourish at the end.

G. David Chater, Chair  
Citizen Advisory Panel  
Regional Parks' Strategic Plan

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ARBUTUS - *East Sooke Regional Park, Vancouver Island*  
PHOTO BY: James R. Page  
FLICKR PROFILE: wild prairie man

## vision for regional parks

Capital Regional District (CRD) parks and trails secure the region's ecology and quality of life by establishing, in perpetuity, an interconnected system of natural lands. Parks protect and restore our region's biodiversity, offer-compatible outdoor recreation and education opportunities and accessible, nourishing, joyful connection with the natural world and our cultural heritage. Regional trails connect communities and provide many outdoor recreation opportunities and an alternate non-motorized transportation network. Parks and trails support the health of our region, its inhabitants and the planet as a whole.

In this century, regional parks and trails will become part of a larger integrated and connected system of natural areas. Subscribing to the idea that "nature needs half", policies and actions are explored through sustainability planning to significantly enhance the system of natural areas in the region in order to sustain life supporting ecological processes. By conserving at least half of the Capital Region's land and water base for nature, residents may live and work in harmony with the environment.



HEERMANN'S GULL - *East Sooke Regional Park*

PHOTO BY: Bill Irvine

FLICKR PROFILE: wjis21

### **Elaboration of the Vision: Nature Conservation & Connecting People with Nature**

Regional parks and trails are part of a mosaic of municipal, provincial and national protected areas in the capital region and form important natural links between adjoining regional districts and the southwest coast of British Columbia (BC). They are the storehouse of the past, and, more importantly, hold the promise of a healthy future. From the pristine San Juan River valley, the historic Sooke flowline and the rugged wilderness of the Sooke Hills to the wildflowers of Galiano Island's

Matthews Point, the CRD stewards an incredible variety of landscapes. Parks and trails contribute immensely to making the CRD one of the healthiest places in the world in which to live. Residents are passionate about the environment, preserving open space, participating in outdoor recreation and learning about the natural world. Parks and trails are interwoven into the daily lives of residents and the built environment, not set apart. They contribute to health, happiness and a sense of renewal; they are integral to creating a connection with nature.

The CRD is situated within the traditional

territory of many First Nations. The relationship of First Nations with the land has deep historical, cultural and spiritual roots. Regional Parks seeks to understand First Nation issues and work toward finding common ground between the goals of Regional Parks and First Nations.

Southern Vancouver Island is facing a momentous period in its history. Rich cultural heritage and an abundance of wild lands characterize the past. Shaping the future is the need for quick action in acquiring increasingly threatened or disappearing ecosystems, many of which are at the northern extreme of their range and not found elsewhere

MOUNT WORK REGIONAL PARK - *One of our largest regional parks, Mount Work includes three lakes, 11 km of hiking trails and a separate mountain-biking area*

PHOTO SOURCED FROM CRD IMAGE LIBRARY.



in Canada. There exists a pressing obligation and responsibility to make continued expansion of protected areas an important goal. Determined, timely action is required in order to secure the lands upon which the local wellbeing and quality of life depend.

To preserve and connect the most meaningful places in the region as a whole, it is important to focus on biodiversity as a guiding principle when making acquisition, management and restoration decisions. Cultivating biodiversity—the diversity of living things in composition, structure and function—is the key to ecological integrity

and broad biological health. Partnerships and coordination with other park, trail and private landowner stewards will help ensure the enactment of this principle. The conservation of biodiversity is a way to support climate actions, healthy watersheds, non-motorized transportation networks, education and economic opportunities. By cultivating these principles, Regional Parks will buffer against the challenges of urban and suburban growth, physically connect regional parks through protection of contiguous areas and steward native species and habitats for their local and global significance.

This region is poised to move forward to the next level of environmental understanding and ecological stewardship. For the Garry oak meadows and coastal Douglas fir forests, for the salmon bearing streams and the green lakes of the Highlands, this vision offers a future that will see parks and trails act as an ecological storehouse. Thus will the region be sheltered from unbridled growth and ecosystems be safeguarded—unharmful, woven into the cultural fabric and cherished for all time.

SATIN FLOWER - *Mount Wells Regional Park*  
PHOTO BY: Robin Robinson  
FLICKR PROFILE: robinnestrige



# the mission of regional parks

The mission defines the fundamental purpose of Regional Parks, describing: why it exists, what it does, and the level of performance to be met or surpassed. The mission of Regional Parks is to:

1. Establish and expand a diverse and connected system of regional parks that protect the region's biodiversity, varied ecosystems and landscapes.
2. Establish and expand a regional trails system that connects communities of the capital region and connects the CRD to the Cowichan Valley Regional District and to Metro Vancouver.
3. Manage the regional parks and trails system as a whole and as part of a network of parks and trails in the CRD.
4. Conserve and restore parklands so that they retain their ecological and cultural integrity.
5. Provide a range of compatible and accessible non-motorized outdoor visitor experiences and activities, for people of all ages and abilities, throughout the regional parks and trails system that foster enjoyment of and appreciation and respect for the region's natural environment.
6. Provide the necessary facilities and services for safe and enjoyable use of regional parks and trails.
7. Practice and facilitate wise stewardship of ecological and cultural values through the use of best management practices and a planned, scientific and precautionary approach, with targeted protection and enhancement actions.

8. Minimize the impact of facilities and visitor use on the ecological and cultural integrity of the parks.
9. Provide leadership to help guide the development of planning policy that affects Regional Parks' ecological and outdoor recreation interests. In addition, serve as a leading advocate for the protection of the region's green and blue spaces through participation in the preparation of the Regional Sustainability Strategy.
10. Integrate the interests of First Nations in park management.
11. Contribute to the regional economy.
12. Work in partnership to accomplish the vision for Regional Parks.
13. Engage residents of the CRD and visitors to regional parks and trails in park planning and management in open and inclusive processes.
14. Provide environmental and cultural interpretation that focuses on the visitor's relationship to nature, natural processes, ecology, the value of natural conditions, and the cultural history and stories of the parklands and trails.
15. Provide information to parks and trails visitors about the ecological and cultural values of the parklands and trails, visitors' role in park stewardship, and the connection of how regional parks and trails help achieve the CRD's Strategic Plan and Regional Sustainability Strategy.
16. Integrate the transportation function of regional trails into planning and operating the trails.



JORDAN RIVER REGIONAL PARK RESERVE - Sandcut Beach, a longtime favourite beach for CRD residents, was acquired by the CRD and its partners in 2010.

PHOTO BY: Rachael Griffin  
FLICKR PROFILE: Aqua Green

# overview of the regional parks strategic plan

## 2012—2021

### **Planning for the Health of Regional Parks & Trails, Ecosystems and Residents of the Region**

In 2009, the CRD Board approved a process to prepare a ten-year strategic plan for Regional Parks. This planning work is critical as the last ten years have seen rapid suburban growth, the acquisition of 4500 hectares for regional parks, development of the E&N Rail Trail, and visits to regional parks and trails topping 5 million. Population growth is anticipated to continue, with projections forecasting an increase of 111,000 people by 2038, for a total regional population of 475,000. If

suburban development continues unchecked serious consequences for the health of our environment and residents will result. Regional Parks needs to focus on building a strong foundation over the next ten years. A longer term plan is required in order to prepare for the future in this region where parks are increasingly valued for their ecological goods and services and regional trails are valued as primary transportation routes.

A major part of the process to prepare the Regional Parks Strategic Plan was the establishment of a the Citizen Advisory Panel (CAP).

THETIS LAKE REGIONAL PARK - *Trail rider for people with disabilities.*

PHOTO BY: Gerry Graham



This plan represents the work of the CAP over the past 18 months. It is based on what the CAP heard from the community, interest groups and other park agencies in the spring of 2010 and 2011 and learned from the review of technical information.

The Strategic Plan provides a long-term vision for regional parks and trails – a vision that looks out to the end of this century. This ten-year strategic plan represents the first step along that path. The plan builds on the success of the Regional Parks 2000 Master Plan. It is founded on the belief that regional parks and

trails provide immense benefits to the region and that it is necessary to plan today to protect those natural areas that are vital to the long-term health of the region’s natural environment and the health of the people who live here. This long-term and present-day perspective underpins the entire Strategic Plan.

The highlights of the plan are:

- Confirmation that Regional Parks is on the right track and that nature protection is Regional Parks’ top priority.

- Conserving biodiversity, connecting natural areas, and providing compatible recreation opportunities for people of all ages and abilities to experience regional parks and trails are the centerpieces of the plan.
- The plan advocates for compatible recreation activities in regional parks and trails that fills the gaps in the current system, connects communities and addresses the needs of existing and changing demographics.
- Environmental interpretation and communication are essential functions of Regional Parks and the CRD as a whole.



E&N RAIL TRAIL - Built within the existing E&N rail corridor, the "Rail-With-Trail" will meander through developing communities and urban settings.

PHOTO SOURCED FROM CRD IMAGE LIBRARY

- The need to deliver education and activity programs that engage families and youth, and connect them to regional parks and trails.
- The vision presented in this plan sees at least half of the region's land and water base managed for the conservation of nature. This is a region wide strategic issue to be discussed in the preparation of the Regional Sustainability Strategy.
- To accomplish the proposed regional parks and trails system shown on map 4, substantial progress is needed over the next

25 years to achieve it. In addition, regional integrated land and water use planning is necessary to plan and manage connectivity in order to maintain life-supporting natural systems across the region.

- The proposed regional parks and trails system presents two key concepts; (1) a connected system of natural areas throughout the region and with emphasis on potential regional park areas west of the Sooke River, and (2) a regional trails system that would enable people to walk the length of the region, ride a horse for

long distances or cycle for commuting and recreation on paved trails.

- To maintain the direction from the previous master plan that off-road motorized use is not compatible with the vision and mission of regional parks and trails. Off-road motorized use has high recreational value in the region and needs designated spaces outside of regional parks. This could be achieved through partnerships with public and private land managers in the region. The CRD could take a lead role to facilitate these potential partnerships.

EASTERN TRILLIUM - *Trans Canada Trail,  
Vancouver Island*  
PHOTO BY: Bill Irvine  
FLICKR PROFILE: wjis21



- Six strategic priorities are identified that would guide the work of Regional Parks over the next five years and include:
  1. Strengthen the management of existing parks and trails.
  2. Strategically plan for and open existing land banked park reserves and trails as resources are approved.
  3. Strengthen community involvement, education and partnerships.
  4. Prepare for future land acquisitions.
  5. Promote the health benefits of regional parks and trails.
  6. Engage in planning for regional sustainability.
- Other highlights include the preparation of a financial plan as a supplementary document to the Strategic Plan to guide Regional Parks financial management over the next five years and begin preparing for Regional Parks 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2016.

## PART ONE

# 1 overview of the capital regional district

GALLOPING GOOSE REGIONAL TRAIL - *This picturesque multi-use trail, formerly a railway line, moves through urban, rural and wilderness scenery on its 55 kilometre journey from Victoria to Sooke.*

PHOTO BY: Paul Rioux  
FLICKR PROFILE: Paul Rioux

Planning for the future of regional parks and trails is a strategic function that Regional Parks carries out approximately every 10 years. Past planning efforts have influenced where Regional Parks is today – from establishing the first four regional parks in 1966, to proposing a system of regional parks and trails and defining policies to manage regional parks in 1987, to establishing the Land Acquisition Fund in 2000 and acquiring significant new park and trail lands.

## 1.1 administrative setting

The Capital Regional District (CRD) is one of 28 regional districts in British Columbia. The CRD is regional government for the 13 municipalities and three electoral areas that are located on the southern tip of Vancouver Island. The CRD covers an area of 245,000 hectares and extends from Port Renfrew in the west, to the southern slopes of the Malahat, from Victoria to the Saanich Peninsula and the Southern Gulf Islands (see Map 1).

The mission of the CRD is: diverse communities working together to better serve public interest and build a liveable, sustainable region.

Since 1966, Regional Parks has been one of the services provided by the CRD. Regional parks and trails complement other parks and recreation services provided by municipalities, electoral areas and the provincial and federal governments. Regional Parks is governed by the CRD Board through the Regional Parks Committee.

The region owns nearly 48,000 hectares of land through the Parks and Community Services and Integrated Water Services departments, which together deliver many services and programs that address



## 1.2 the physical setting

regional, environmental, social and economic sustainability, thereby playing a significant role in overall land and resource management in the region.

The CRD encompasses a unique area in Canada, with a complex geography and climate that includes a diverse range of ecosystems. Ecologically, the CRD is located within three biogeoclimatic zones: Coastal Douglas-fir (CDF), Coastal Western Hemlock (CWH) and Mountain Hemlock (MH) (see Map 2). The CDF covers 72,825 hectares (30.5 percent of the region), the CWH covers 160,735 hectares (68 percent of the region) and MH covers 3475 hectares (1.5 percent of the region).

The intersection of intense development pressure and unique ecosystems has made the CRD one of Canada's focal points of conservation concern. Protected areas, including land set aside for conservation purposes by park agencies and land trusts, are quickly becoming the only remaining areas of natural habitat within the developed landscape of the CRD. This fact underscores the critical importance of on-going, appropriate stewardship of acquired lands to protect and restore native biodiversity over the long-term.<sup>1</sup> Regional parks play a critical role in helping protect these conservation values.

# Capital Regional District

## Map 2

### Biogeoclimatic Zones in CRD



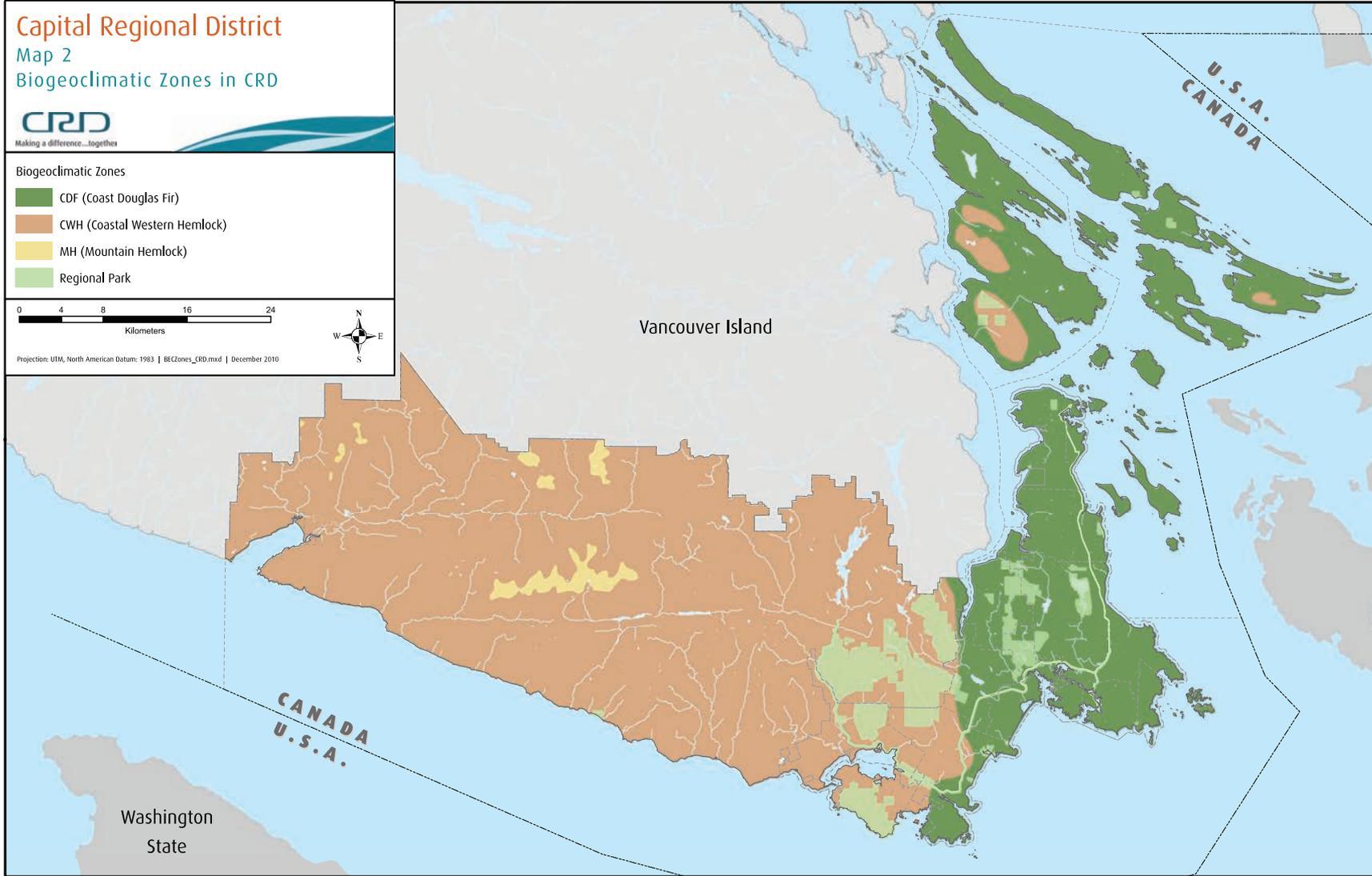
Making a difference...together

#### Biogeoclimatic Zones

-  CDF (Coast Douglas Fir)
-  CWH (Coastal Western Hemlock)
-  MH (Mountain Hemlock)
-  Regional Park



Projection: UTM, North American Datum: 1983 | BECZones\_CRD.mxd | December 2010



map 2

HAIRY WOODPECKER - *Found along a deep forest trail near Roche Cove.*

PHOTO BY: Julie Macdonald  
FLICKR PROFILE: TT\_MAC



Several ecosystems in the CDF zone have been recognized as globally imperilled, and this zone contains some of the most endangered ecosystems in Canada.<sup>2</sup> The zone is home to 24 species that are of global conservation concern, as well as 35 ecological communities and 218 wildlife and plant species that are provincially at risk. Historic and current development pressures have had and continue to have significant negative impacts on the biodiversity of this zone. Considerable effort will be required to maintain and restore biodiversity values here. The major threats to biodiversity are residential and commercial development, biological resource uses and invasive species.

Both the CWH and MH zones are located in the western part of the CRD, which has been significantly affected by resource extraction over the last 100 years. Protecting the remaining older forests and intact watersheds is a priority.<sup>3</sup>

The Nature Conservancy of Canada has prepared a conservation plan (the Salish Sea Natural Area Conservation Plan) for about half of the area in the CRD, excluding the area generally west of Sooke. The Plan identified nine biodiversity targets such as Garry oak and arbutus ecosystem protection.

## 1.3

# the CRD regional sustainability strategy

The Regional Growth Strategy (RGS) is the CRD's long-term growth management plan that addresses regional issues such as transportation, population change, settlement patterns and resource management. The RGS was adopted by the region and accepted by member municipalities in 2003. The strategy oversees the Growth Management Planning Area (GMPA), which includes all 13 municipalities and the Juan de Fuca Electoral Area (over 192,600 hectares on Southern Vancouver Island).

The RGS promotes the long-term livability of the region and seeks to optimize social, economic and environmental performance. It is now being updated as part of the 5-year review process and will be revised as the region's sustainability strategy. The Regional Sustainability Strategy (RSS) will build on the base of the RGS, increasing its scope to provide leadership and direction on climate action, social well-being and food security, in addition to its current topic areas.

Sustainability embraces the long-term commitment to preserving and revitalizing natural systems, fostering social resilience and community well-being and generating ongoing prosperity and affordability. These sustainability principles are at the core of the CRD's vision for the future and form the foundation of the RSS. The RSS will set out a series of strategies and actions for the region, providing the over-arching policy framework to achieve desired outcomes. The Regional Parks Strategic Plan is out in front of the process and will be recognized in the RSS as a key strategy for protecting the natural environment.

*Following strong evidence and efforts elsewhere in the world, the CAP believes that at least half of the land and water in the region be managed for the conservation of nature. This is a region wide strategic issue which needs to be considered in light of environmental, social and economic interests. This vision can be accomplished using a variety of conservation methods, including graduated forms of protection, and through the collaboration of a wide*

*range of private, public and First Nations partners. Regional parks and trails and other protected areas in the CRD would serve as the core of this larger proposed network.*

*The CAP recommends that this visionary concept be integrated into the preparation of the Regional Sustainability Strategy.*

figure 1: how regional parks contributes to achieving regional sustainability

**ENVIRONMENTAL**



**ECONOMIC**



**SOCIAL**



# 1.4 the role of parks & trails in the region

The regional parks and trails network is part of a spectrum of parks and protected areas located across the region. These parks serve a range of recreational, ecological, green space and amenity purposes. Trails serve both a transportation and recreation function. Various land trusts also own or have rights to land for conservation purposes. The range of parks, trails and conservation lands across the CRD is presented in Map 3 and Table 1. This land accounts for 27,277 hectares, or 11 percent of the region's land base.

**table 1: CRD land base under park or protected area status and within the greater victoria water supply area (as of March 12, 2012)**

JURISDICTION	HECTARES	% OF CRD LAND BASE
National Parks	4,127	1.70
Provincial Parks and Ecological Reserves	6,501	2.65
Regional Parks	12,763	5.17
Municipal Parks	1,993	0.81
Islands Trust Fund	1011	0.40
Land Trusts	882	0.30
<b>Total Park and Protected Area</b>	<b>27,277</b>	<b>11.03</b>
Greater Victoria Water Supply Area	20,549	8.4
<b>Total</b>	<b>47,826</b>	<b>19.43</b>

**Capital Regional District**  
**Map 3**  
**Parks and Protected Areas in CRD**

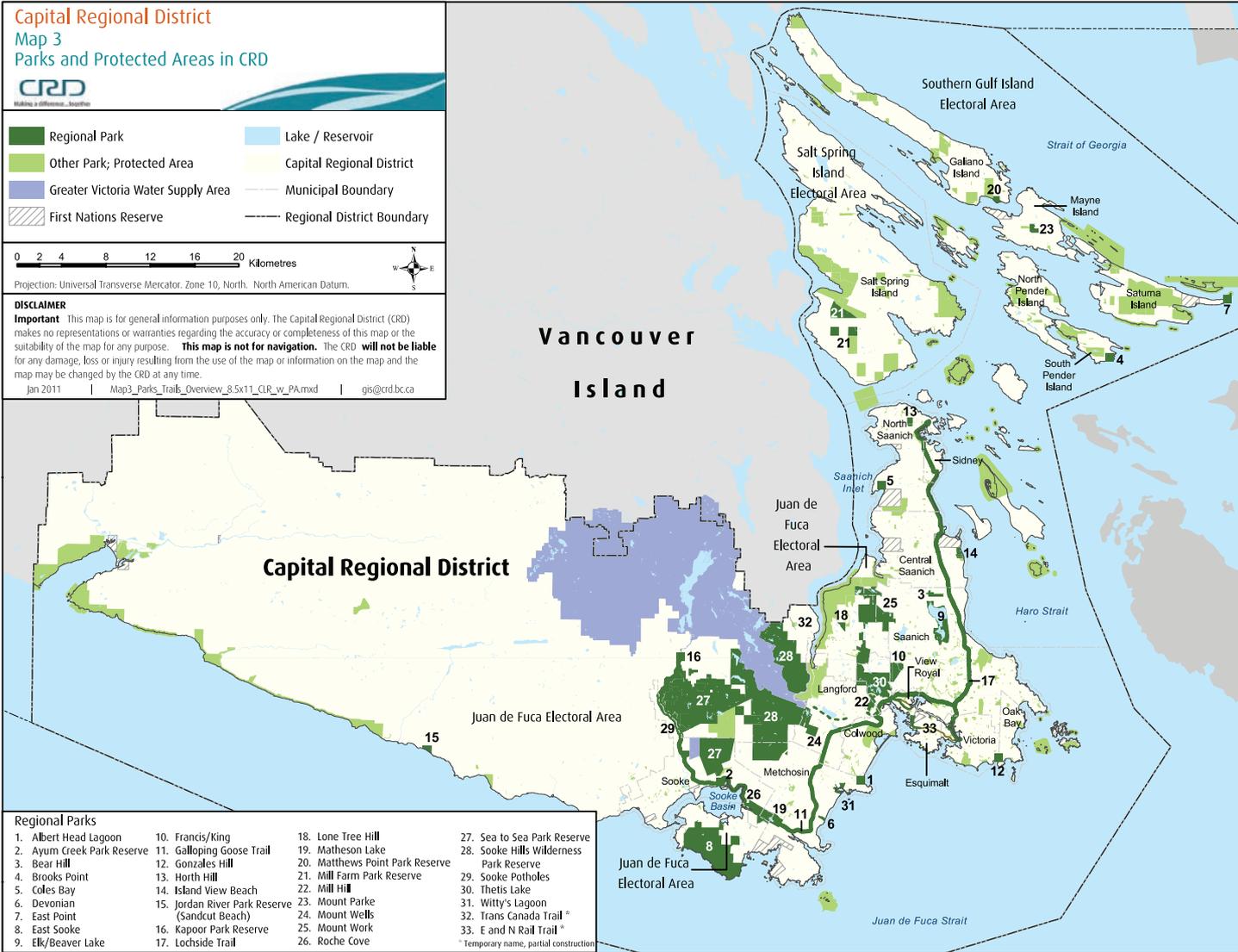


- Regional Park
- Other Park; Protected Area
- Greater Victoria Water Supply Area
- First Nations Reserve
- Lake / Reservoir
- Capital Regional District
- Municipal Boundary
- Regional District Boundary



**DISCLAIMER**  
**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.

Jan 2011 | Map3\_Parks\_Trails\_Overview\_8.5x11\_CLR\_w\_PA.mxd | gis@crd.bc.ca



- | Regional Parks             |   |   |
|----------------------------|---|---|
| 1. Albert Head Lagoon      | 10. Francis/King                              | 18. Lone Tree Hill                      |
| 2. Ayum Creek Park Reserve | 11. Galloping Goose Trail                     | 19. Matheson Lake                       |
| 3. Bear Hill               | 12. Gonzales Hill                             | 20. Matthews Point Park Reserve         |
| 4. Brooks Point            | 13. Horth Hill                                | 21. Mill Farm Park Reserve              |
| 5. Coles Bay               | 14. Island View Beach                         | 22. Mill Hill                           |
| 6. Devonian                | 15. Jordan River Park Reserve (Sandcut Beach) | 23. Mount Parke                         |
| 7. East Point              | 16. Kapoor Park Reserve                       | 24. Mount Wells                         |
| 8. East Sooke              | 17. Lochside Trail                            | 25. Mount Work                          |
| 9. Elk/Beaver Lake         |   | 26. Roche Cove                          |
|                            |   | 27. Sea to Sea Park Reserve             |
|                            |   | 28. Sooke Hills Wilderness Park Reserve |
|                            |   | 29. Sooke Potholes                      |
|                            |   | 30. Thetis Lake                         |
|                            |   | 31. Wittly's Lagoon                     |
|                            |   | 32. Trans Canada Trail *                |
|                            |   | 33. E and N Rail Trail *                |
- \* Temporary name, partial construction

**table 2: comparison of park agencies in the CRD**

	<b>NATIONAL PARKS</b>	<b>PROVINCIAL PARKS, PROTECTED AREAS &amp; ECOLOGICAL RESERVES</b>	<b>REGIONAL PARKS</b>	<b>MUNICIPAL/ELECTORAL AREA PARKS</b>	<b>ISLANDS TRUST FUND</b>
<b>GEOGRAPHIC FOCUS</b>	Canada	British Columbia	Capital Regional District	Municipal/Electoral Area Boundaries	Gulf Islands
<b>SIZE OF PARK AREA</b>	Generally very large	Large (e.g., one million hectares) to small (e.g., 10 hectares)	7,000 hectares to five hectares	Generally small (e.g., 100 hectares to less than one hectare)	1011 hectares protected in 80 properties
<b>PURPOSE/VISION</b>	<p>Fulfill national and international responsibilities in heritage recognition and conservation.</p> <p>Commemorate, protect and present places that are significant examples of Canada’s cultural and natural heritage.</p> <p>Encourage public understanding, appreciation and enjoyment of this heritage, while ensuring long-term ecological and commemorative integrity.</p>	<p>BC Parks are parks, protected areas and conservation land held as a public trust.</p> <p>The mission is to protect representative and special natural places within the Province’s Protected Areas System for world class conservation, outdoor recreation, education and scientific study.</p>	<p>Regional parks protect natural areas that define the geography of the CRD.</p> <p>Provide opportunities for non-motorized outdoor recreation experiences and activities for residents of the region.</p> <p>Regional trails provide a transportation route for commuting or recreation on designated corridors, and habitat for wildlife and plants.</p>	<p>Local parks, trails and pathways, playgrounds, natural areas, ecologically significant areas, altered landscapes</p>	<p>Protecting in perpetuity the native species and natural systems of the islands.</p> <p>Engaged residents and conservation partners work together to protect large natural areas and key wildlife habitat.</p> <p>Viable ecosystems flourish alongside healthy islands communities.</p>
<b>TYPE OF PARKS</b>	<p>National Parks</p> <p>National Historic Parks</p> <p>National Marine Conservation Areas</p>	Wilderness, large natural areas, conservation, hiking trails, campgrounds	Conservation, wilderness, natural area, outdoor recreation parks	Sports fields, playgrounds, recreation centres, trails, nature parks	Natural areas and covenants on private land
<b>FUNCTION OF PARKS AND TRAILS</b>	Natural areas, ecological significance, important habitat for plants and animals	Natural areas, ecological significance, important habitat for plants and animals, outdoor recreation.	Natural areas, ecological significance, important habitat for plants and animals	Trails and pathways that connect the region’s communities and adjacent regional districts	Natural areas, ecologically significant habitats for plants and animals
<b>TARGET AUDIENCE</b>	Canadians and tourists	Residents of the province and tourists	Residents of the CRD and tourists	Residents in neighbourhoods and the municipality	Gulf Island Residents and Tourists



WITTY'S LAGOON REGIONAL PARK - *Regional Parks staff help youth understand the marine environment.*

PHOTO SOURCED FROM CRD IMAGE LIBRARY

At one end of the spectrum are local parks and trails managed by municipalities or one of the three electoral areas. The primary role of these parks and trails is to provide amenities and green space for residents within the municipality or electoral area. This includes facilities for organized sports, recreation centres and playgrounds. It also includes land for green and open space, protection of the natural environment and outdoor recreation and trails. These areas are integrated into the urban and suburban land-use pattern. At the other end of the spectrum are national parks.

In between are provincial and regional parks and lands held by the Islands Trust and other land trusts. A comparison of the functions among the various park systems is presented in Table 2.

Comprising 51 percent of all the protected land in the capital region, regional parks are the core of the protected areas system in the CRD. At 110 kilometres (km), the regional trails system is the primary arterial trails system in the region, serving both recreational users and commuters. It is also recognized as part of the primary inter-

COMBINING PARKS, PROTECTED AREAS AND LAND WITHIN  
THE GREATER VICTORIA WATER SUPPLY AREA THE TOTAL  
LAND PROTECTED IS **47,826** HECTARES  
OR **19.4** PERCENT OF THE REGION'S LAND BASE.

community cycling network as identified in the region's Pedestrian and Cycling Master Plan. In 2010, an estimated 5 million visits were made to regional parks and trails.

### **1.4.1 Greater Victoria Water Supply Area**

In addition to parks and protected areas, the Greater Victoria Water Supply Area, managed by CRD Integrated Water Services, also contributes to the protection of ecological integrity and biodiversity in the region. The Water Supply Area is closed to public access, managed to protect the quality and supply of drinking water for Greater Victoria, and compatible environmental values. The Water Supply Area also contributes to the protection

of the Sea to Sea Regional Green-Blue Belt and provides ecological connectivity with existing regional and provincial parks.



WITTY'S LAGOON - *low tide at the entrance to Witty's Lagoon.*

PHOTO BY: Terry Tuk  
FLICKR PROFILE: TT\_MAC

In 2016, Regional Parks will celebrate its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary. Over the past five decades, residents, groups and all levels of government have worked together to set aside 13,000 hectares of land for regional parks and trails. The role of Regional Parks is based on two fundamental principles: caring for the natural environment and ensuring that compatible access is provided for people to enjoy and experience these lands.

## 2 background to preparing the regional parks strategic plan

Whether one lives in, works in or is visiting the capital region, regional parks and trails are valued by all – commuters cycling along the Galloping Goose Trail, visitors hiking the Coast Trail in East Sooke, families picnicking at Elk/Beaver Lake, a couple watching killer whales in Boundary Pass from Gowlland Point, or a resident in downtown Victoria looking west to the hilltops in the Sea to Sea Green Blue Belt that runs from Saanich Inlet to Sooke

Basin. Regional parks and trails are community treasures that are a part of everyday life. They protect the natural environment, add immeasurably to the quality of life enjoyed in the capital region, and are vital to personal health and the health of the local environment. They are a gift to future generations.

## 2.1

# purpose & goals for preparing the strategic plan

The Regional Parks Strategic Plan serves two purposes:

- To plan fundamental organizational decisions for 2012 to 2021: what the organization does, why it does it, what are the most important opportunities and challenges to which the organization needs to respond, and what the right actions are to move the organization forward.
- To engage citizens, First Nations, governments, CRD Directors and Regional Parks volunteers and staff in the process



MILL HILL REGIONAL PARK - *Hike on trails that meander past a Douglas-fir forest, a Garry oak ecosystem and a rocky hilltop.*

PHOTO SOURCED FROM CRD IMAGE LIBRARY

of preparing the Strategic Plan, in an open and inclusive way, by collaborating with, informing, consulting and involving them.<sup>4</sup>

The goals of preparing the Strategic Plan are to address the:

- values associated with Regional Parks;
- contribution of Regional Parks to the social-cultural, economic and environmental sustainability of the region;
- challenges facing Regional Parks;
- vision and mission for Regional Parks;
- link between the Regional Parks Strategic Plan and other CRD initiatives, such as the Regional Sustainability Strategy, Climate Action Program, transportation planning and watershed protection;
- future regional parks and trails system, and how this system will be integrated with other parks and trails systems and other natural lands in the region;
- goals that will be used to help guide the management of regional parks and trails; and
- priorities for the next ten-years.

The Strategic Plan provides a long-term vision for regional parks and trails – a vision that extends to the end of this century. It is based on the projection that there will be an increase of approximately 111,000 people living in the capital region over the next 30 years, and many more by the end of the century. This anticipated population growth means it's more important than ever to protect the natural

SANDCUT FALLS - *Sandcut Creek empties onto the gravel at Sandcut Beach.*

PHOTO BY: Bryn Tassell  
FLICKR PROFILE: Bryn Tassell

environment and provide space for outdoor recreation. The Strategic Plan is founded on the belief that it is necessary to plan today to protect those natural areas that are vital to both the current and the long-term health of the region's natural environment and the health of residents. This dual long-term and present-day perspective underpins the entire Strategic Plan.

The Strategic Plan also establishes a set of management goals that define the long-term, "big picture" framework within which policy, fiscal, administrative and strategic decisions

will be made. In this way, the plan will help Regional Parks do three important things: (1) ensure that everyone is working in the same direction, (2) focus energies, and (3) provide the flexibility needed to be able to respond effectively to changing circumstances.



## 2.2

# the CRD regional parks master plan (2000)

Planning for regional parks and trails in the capital region has been done for the last 50 years. Each plan has influenced the next and helps define where Regional Parks is today. The current Strategic Plan builds on the CRD Regional Parks Master Plan (2000) (hereafter referred to as Master Plan) adopted by the CRD Board in 2000. That Master Plan, which had a ten-year timeframe, presented a system-wide scope for the future of regional parks and trails and accordingly did not address park-specific management or operational issues. The plan provided a vision for Regional Parks, a statement

of purpose for the parks and trails, a map of the proposed system of regional parks and trails, guidelines for managing regional parks and trails, and an implementation strategy that included strategic directions for the department.

The Master Plan had a major influence on shaping regional parks and trails that are in place today. It helped guide the stewardship of the natural environment, connect people to the land, and provide opportunities for residents, community organizations, and other levels of government to partner with Regional Parks to achieve the vision.

The key results of the Master Plan were:

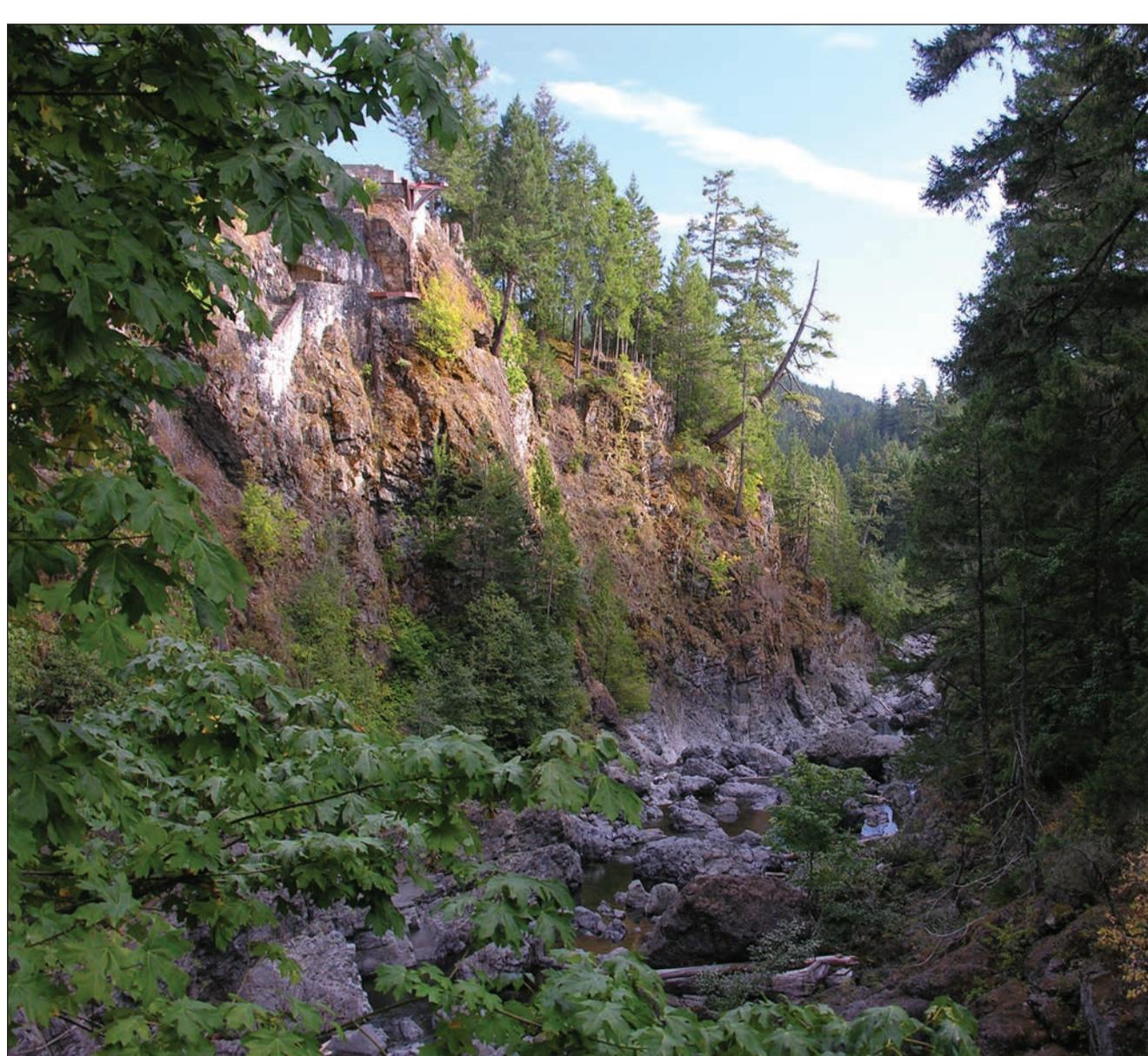
- establishing the Regional Parks Land Acquisition Fund;
- acquiring 4,480 hectares of land;
- partnering with land trusts, other levels of government, and landowners to acquire land whereby the CRD contributed 66 percent of the funds and partners contributed 34 percent;
- an increase in the number of volunteers involved in environmental protection;

WITTY'S LAGOON REGIONAL PARK - Forested trails, a species-rich lagoon and a long sandy beach make this park a frequent destination for locals and tourists to our region.

PHOTO BY: Rachael Griffin  
FLICKR PROFILE: Aqua Green

- completing management plans for Lochside Regional Trail and Sooke Potholes, Ayum Creek, Kapoor, Thetis, Francis-King, Mill Hill, Sea to Sea Green Blue Belt, Sooke Hills Wilderness and Brooks Point regional parks;
  - restoring the nationally endangered Garry oak ecosystem in Mill Hill Regional Park;
  - establishment of the Lochside Regional Trail;
  - initiating development of the E&N Rail Trail;
  - completing 90 percent of the Sea to Sea Green Blue Belt boundary; and
  - opening a new regional park at Sooke Potholes.
- Building on the success of the previous decade, Regional Parks now needs to set a direction for the coming years and through to the end of this century.
- In preparing this plan, the term “Master Plan” has been changed to “Strategic Plan” to more accurately reflect the intent of the document: a master plan tends to be associated with a land-use plan for the development of an area; a strategic plan is a management tool to address fundamental and long-term organizational decisions and actions.





SOOKE POTHoles REGIONAL PARK - *This park is named for the unique pool-like river formations that make enchanting swimming holes.*

PHOTO BY: Robin Robinson  
FLICKR PROFILE: robinnestridge

## 2.3

# how the strategic plan was prepared

Terms of Reference approved by the CRD Board in 2009 guide the Regional Parks three-stage process in preparing the Strategic Plan, per Figure 2.

The comments received in stage 1 and 2 are documented in two reports which are available from Regional Parks<sup>5</sup>. These comments influenced preparation of the plan and the key messages are woven into the Strategic Plan.

**figure 2: strategic planning process**



## 2.4

# Lessons in regional park planning & management from around the world

Parks are found throughout the world. They are established and maintained to protect significant international, national, regional and local lands and water, buffer the impact of urban development on people, and provide areas for people to experience nature and enjoy outdoor recreation. Some well-known examples include Banff National Park in Canada; the Lake District National Park in Great Britain; the Grand Canyon National Park in the United States; the Great Barrier Reef National Marine Park in Australia; regional parks in Metro Vancouver, Metro Portland,

Boulder County Colorado and Auckland, New Zealand; and urban parks such as Stanley Park in Vancouver, Central Park in New York, Hyde Park in London, England, and Beacon Hill Park in Victoria. Parks contribute to the protection of the natural environment, mitigating the loss of global biodiversity. They provide spaces where people can escape from the built urban landscape, connect with nature, participate in recreation, and come together with family and friends. Not least, parks generate employment and income through compatible tourism.

The International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) has identified urban and suburban growth as one of the most significant threats to biodiversity and the health of the environment and people. In 2002, the IUCN established the Cities and Protected Areas program to address the need for protected areas in and around cities. This work recognizes that regions and cities have a significant role in the global effort to protect and manage vulnerable ecosystems. The challenge is how to build and manage regions within nature, rather than in opposition to it. The planning

BROOKS POINT REGIONAL PARK - *Located on Pender Island, Brooks Point is an oceanfront park featuring an intertidal rocky shore and beach, meadow and commanding views.*

PHOTO SOURCED FROM CRD IMAGE LIBRARY



for protecting and conserving biodiversity and connecting people to these areas needs to be integrated into regionally sustainable practices. There exists a unique opportunity in the CRD to accomplish this. The region has a unique and diverse natural environment and a long-standing commitment to greenspace protection.

Another key international initiative is the Healthy Parks—Healthy People program in New Zealand, Australia, Great Britain and Canada. The key messages from this initiative are that the environmental health of parks

results in a healthy community, and spending time in a well cared for park environment leads to greater health and fitness for individuals.

There is a clear call, from people who live in cities and regions throughout the world, to establish parks. These parks improve, protect and sustain a healthy natural environment and contribute immensely to the overall wellbeing and health of people. In many areas, regional parks are part of the fabric of urban and regional land use and are essential ‘green infrastructure’. Parks play a critical role in conserving what is left of dwindling urban

and regional biodiversity, as they contribute to ecological and human health.

In North America, the growth in parks and trails has been especially significant at the county and regional level. This has come in response to the negative impact that regional growth has had and continues to have on spaces and places that people call home – areas they visit as part of their everyday life, and with which they have a deep connection. These are also important natural ecological areas, home to animals and plants, which help conserve the planet at a local level.



FRANCIS KING REGIONAL PARK - *Elsie King accessible boardwalk.*

PHOTO SOURCED FROM CRD IMAGE LIBRARY

OPPOSITE PAGE:  
TODD CREEK TRESTLE, GALLOPING GOOSE REGIONAL TRAIL-  
This is part of the Trans Canada Trail, a national multi-use  
trail system linking trails from coast to coast.

PHOTO BY: H  l  ne Cyr  
PHOTO SOURCED FROM CRD IMAGE LIBRARY

The best planning and management practices of leading regional park systems throughout the world indicate that:

- Protecting the natural environment is a primary function of regional parks and is achieved by conserving nature, sustaining the variety of life, protecting the earth's outstanding features and processes, storing carbon and maintaining clean air and water.
- Regional parks build healthy communities by improving physical health, enhancing mental health and wellbeing, and bringing people together.
- Regional parks support science and learning.

- Regional Parks improve our adaptive capacity.
- Regional parks provide many opportunities for non-motorized outdoor recreation.
- Regional parks and trails systems are built on collaboration and partnerships.
- Regional parks provide a buffer to suburban development, protect green space, improve watershed health and are important in defining the land-use pattern in a region.
- Regional parks contribute to the economy by supporting tourism and recreational pursuits and providing direct and indirect employment.

- Regional parks reflect the cultural history of the region.
- Outdoor recreation activities and facilities development should be provided in the context of the protection of the natural environment.
- Protection of the city or regional land base – by non-profit organizations, private landowners and all levels of government, through park, greenspaces and land conservation programs – ranges from 20 to 70 percent.

These best planning and management practices are incorporated into the Strategic Plan where appropriate.



### 3 the value of regional parks & trails



SEA-STAR

PHOTO BY: Minette Layne

PHOTO SOURCED FROM CRD IMAGE LIBRARY

The value of regional parks and trails to the residents of the capital region is wide-ranging. With time, their importance will only increase, as the stresses of urbanization, population growth, changing demographics, loss of natural areas and biodiversity and climate

change continue to affect the region.

This section highlights the value of regional parks and trails to all residents of the capital region, and the value they contribute to making this area one of the best places to live in the world. This value also influences

the management goals that are outlined in Section 6 of this Strategic Plan.

The value of regional parks and trails is presented under five topics, and graphically in Figure 3.

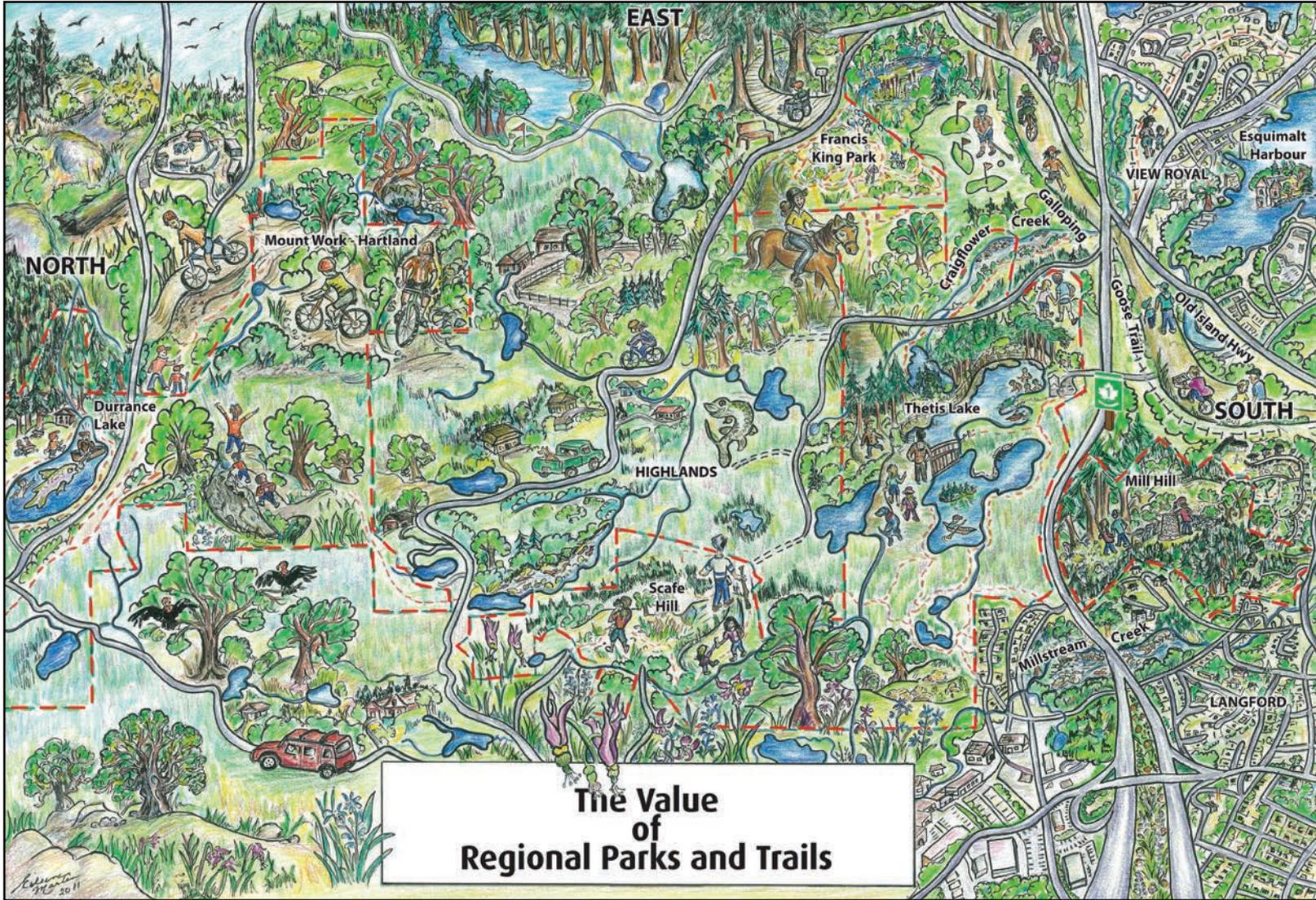


figure 3

## 3.1

# contributing to regional sustainability

Sustainability is the core policy of the CRD, as defined in the CRD Strategic Plan 2009—2011. It is also the basis for the preparation of the Regional Sustainability Strategy.

As ‘green infrastructure’, regional parks and trails are vital components in the environmental, social and cultural, and economic health of the region, and they contribute to sustaining a healthy planet. They are an important resource with which the CRD helps protect the natural world and deal effectively with the pressures of climate change, population growth, urban and

suburban expansion, and the resulting loss of natural areas and the disconnection of people from nature. The value of regional parks and trails in achieving regional sustainability will only increase with time.

## 3.2

# protecting the natural world

The environmental value of regional parks is immense and becomes increasingly significant as the region’s population increases. The parks and trails network protects and conserves ecosystems, landscapes, species and geological features. As climate change and regional growth continue, regional parks will increase in value by protecting carbon-storing vegetation, supporting ecological resiliency and protecting natural areas.

MUTE SWAN - *Albert Head Lagoon Regional Park serves as a wildlife sanctuary and refuge for a variety of birds*

PHOTO BY: Bryn Tassell  
FLICKR PROFILE: Bryn Tassell



### 3.2.1 Conserving Nature

Much of the region's original natural area has been altered or no longer exists. Without parks to protect the remaining habitat or without proper management, parks will become increasingly fragmented and threatened by human settlement and resource use.

Sustaining regional parks for the benefit of people and other living things depends directly on maintaining the long-term environmental health of regional park ecosystems.

### 3.2.2 Sustaining the Variety of Life

Biodiversity, which is a key measure of ecological health, refers to the totality of genes, species and ecosystems within a region. As natural areas, parks help protect this diversity. Regional Parks will continue to strive to help stem the loss of regional biodiversity in the region. Within 26 of the regional parks and trails in the capital region, at least 59 different nationally and/or provincially listed plant species, 31 animal species, and 12 ecological communities are at risk.<sup>6</sup>

### 3.2.3 Protecting the Region's Outstanding Features and Landscapes

Regional parks protect significant geographic features and landscapes in the region, such as the Sooke Hills, Sooke River Potholes, Elk/Beaver Lake and Matthews Point. These are icons in the region and they help define the place where we live. These places also engage park visitors in educational and scientific enquiry and introduce them to natural history.



ELK/BEAVER LAKE REGIONAL PARK - *The lake is used cooperatively by swimmers, wind surfers, sailors, water-skiers, fishers and rowers.*

PHOTO SOURCED FROM CRD IMAGE LIBRARY

### **3.2.4 Maintaining Clean Air & Water**

Vegetation cleans and filters water, traps sediment, recycles nutrients, stabilizes slopes and slows runoff. Large expanses of intact vegetation provided by parks protect the receiving environment from water carried contaminants and mitigate the high cost of flooding.

### **3.2.5 Climate Stabilization**

Regional parks are significant assets in mitigating the challenge of climate change. They protect

large areas of native forest that scrub carbon dioxide from the atmosphere. With anticipated changes to our climate and extremes becoming the norm, it will become increasingly important to identify and manage risks and adapt to change. By protecting this valuable ecosystem service we will reduce future costs for the region.

### **3.2.6 Supporting Science & Learning**

Regional parks are important 'outdoor laboratories' for scientific research about how ecological

systems and processes function. Regional Parks receives many requests each year from individuals and groups wanting to conduct ecological research. Regional parks also provide a great outside classroom, where children and adults can learn about the natural environment. Environmental education is a core function of Regional Parks.

### **3.2.7 Providing Open and Green Space**

Regional parks provide open and green space throughout the region. For example, Thetis

MATHESON LAKE - Mist hangs over serene Matheson Lake as a convoy of ducks drifts by.  
PHOTO BY: James R. Page  
FLICKR PROFILE: wild prairie man

Lake, Francis-King and Mill Hill regional parks create a greenbelt that offers a sense of open space between suburban developments in the City of Langford, the Town of View Royal and the District of Saanich. As the region continues to grow, these green and open spaces will become increasingly important.





ROCHE COVE REGIONAL PARK - *East Sooke, Vancouver Island.*

PHOTO BY: Rachel Grigg  
FLICKR PROFILE: Ray L G

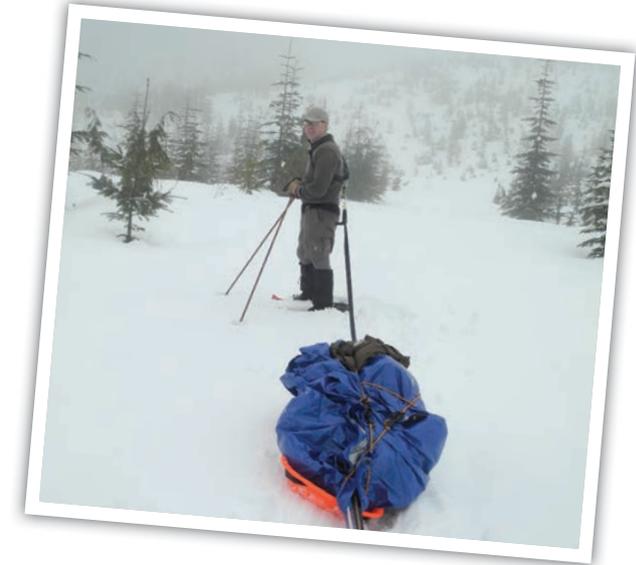
### 3.3 building healthy communities

*“Contact with nature enriches our psychological, emotional and spiritual well-being. Parks are places of adventure and challenge, exercise, peace and quiet, recreation, gathering and relaxation. In them, we find a sense of enjoyment, strong community spirit, and wonder in nature. Parks offer a range of recreation activities to bring families and friends together in appealing places.”*

A healthy regional parks and trails system is a vital component of a healthy local community.

SAN JUAN RIDGE - *Winter recreation opportunities in future regional parks*

PHOTO BY: Tim Conlin



### 3.3.1 Improving Physical Health

Regional parks and trails offer affordable preventative and remedial opportunities to improve physical health. Walking, hiking, cycling, paddling, rowing, horseback riding and swimming are just some of the activities in parks, on waterways and along trails that are known to improve physical health.

### 3.3.2 Enhancing Mental Health & Well-Being

Being outdoors and in nature benefits mental health. It can bring greater self-esteem, a better ability to focus the mind, a clearer sense of motivation, and a feeling of being refreshed and alive – an improved overall quality of life.

### 3.3.3 Bringing People Together

Regional parks, trails, pathways and open

spaces bring families and friends together to have fun, celebrate, experience and discover nature together, or to just relax and take time out. Connecting people to each other – and to the land – is an immense social value that is part of what holds a healthy society together.

### 3.3.4 Including Children & Families in Nature

Research has shown that many children are experiencing “nature deficit disorder.”<sup>8</sup> Regional parks and trails offer nature: they are

ARBUTUS - *East Sooke Regional Park,  
Vancouver Island*

PHOTO BY: Rachel Grigg  
FLICKR PROFILE: Ray L G

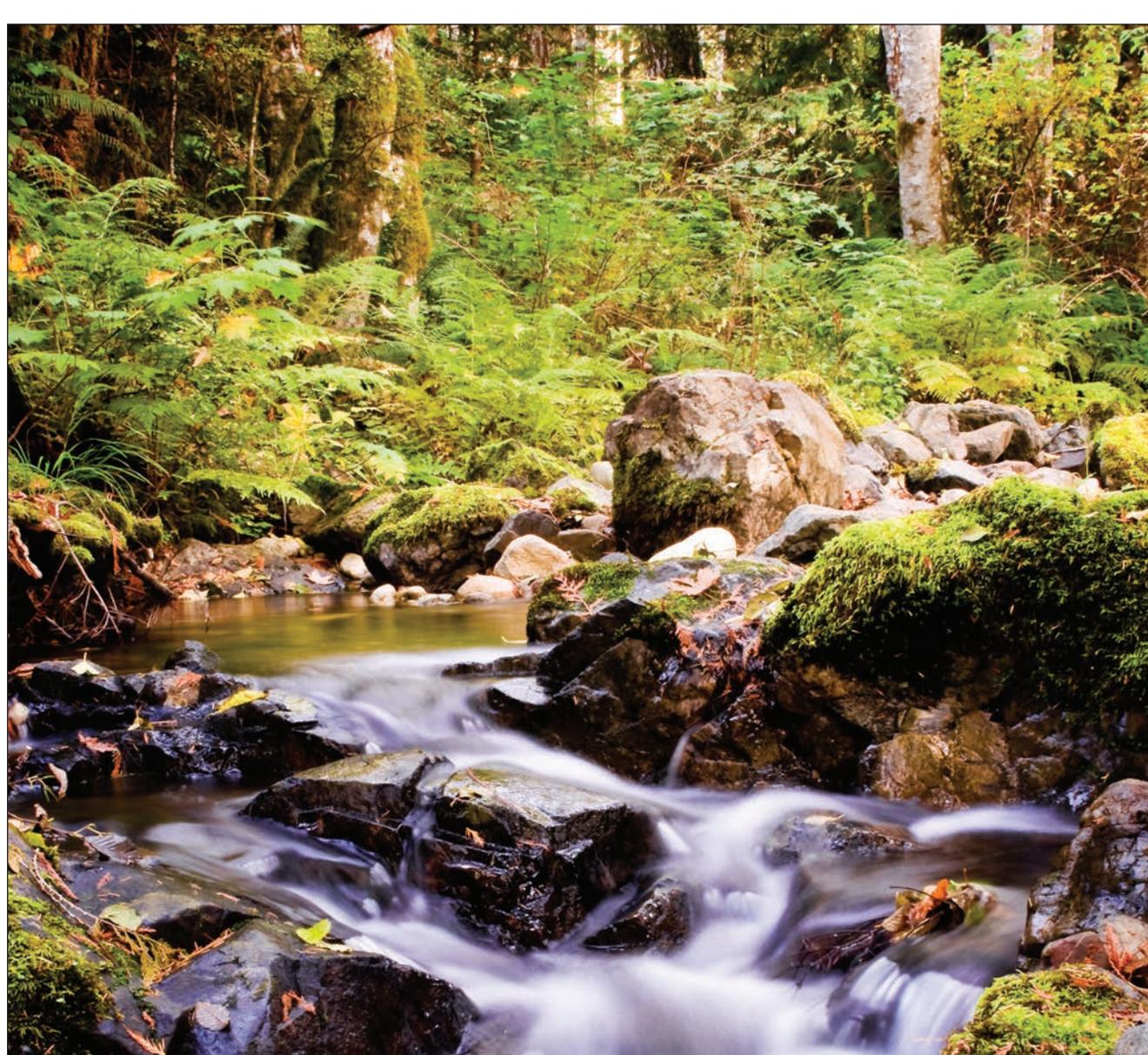


conveniently close to home, safe, affordable to use, and it doesn't take any special equipment or expertise for children (and adults) to be in and learn about nature.

### **3.3.5 Engaging the Community**

Regional parks, trails and open spaces link residents to the land, which offers a rich source of personal discovery, joy, renewal and health. These often inspire a deep sense of belonging and stewardship. Residents are

engaged by volunteering in park planning and management, in helping remove invasive species, in disseminating information to park visitors, and in monitoring parks and trails. Groups such as the South Island Mountain Bike Society, Victoria Rowing Society and Elk/Beaver Lake Equestrian Society also play an active role in providing recreation opportunities.



SOOKE HILLS WILDERNESS REGIONAL PARK RESERVE -  
*The largest park in the CRD, the Sooke Hills also provides  
a buffer to the Greater Victoria Water Supply area.*

PHOTO BY: Terry Tuk  
FLICKR PROFILE: TT\_MAC

## **3.4** contributing to the regional economy

Research has shown that parks  
and trails bring measurable direct  
benefits to a city's economy.<sup>9</sup>

SATIN FLOWER - *Seymour Hill, Thetis Lake Regional Park, Vancouver Island.*

PHOTO BY: Phil Petersen  
FLICKR PROFILE: Phil's Photos



### 3.4.1 Providing Natural Capital

The natural environment in regional parks provides an array of benefits. The ecosystems that provide these benefits are often referred to as “natural capital.” Natural capital refers to the earth’s land, water, atmosphere and resources. This capital is organized and bundled within the earth’s natural ecosystems, which provide resources and flows of services that enable all life to prosper on the earth. Natural capital is critical to the economic and social

wellbeing of the residents of the capital region: trees clean the air; carbon is drawn out of the atmosphere by trees, plants and soils; wetlands filter the water; and forests provide wildlife habitat and store flood waters. Research has shown that natural capital and the benefits it provides are extremely valuable in monetary terms. In reality, they are truly priceless.<sup>10</sup> Rapid population growth and extensive development place unprecedented pressure on natural capital.

### 3.4.2 Contributing to the Tourism Industry

Regional parks and trails are important to tourism in the capital region. It is estimated that approximately 20 percent of the visitors to some regional parks and trails in the summer are tourists.<sup>11</sup> Tourists spend money on accommodation, food and guiding services, and outdoor recreation equipment.

SOUTHERN GULF ISLANDS - *Hikers can enjoy spectacular vistas of the Gulf Islands and the Lower Mainland.*

PHOTO BY: Evan Leeson  
PHOTO SOURCED FROM CRD IMAGE LIBRARY

### 3.4.3 Supporting the Recreation Industry

For many people in the region, outdoor recreation is part of their lifestyle. This creates demand for retail services for everything from outdoor equipment and clothing to a refreshment and a meal at the end of a hike.



ROCHE COVE REGIONAL PARK - *At the 34 km marker on the Galloping Goose Trail.*

PHOTO BY: Bill Irvine  
FLICKR PROFILE: wjis21



### 3.4.4 Enhancing Property Values

As research has shown, homes that are close to parks and trails and/or have a parkland view, have a higher value than those without that type of access.

### 3.4.5 Reducing Health Care Costs

Numerous studies have shown that physically inactive people are more of an economic burden to a society than are those who are

regularly physically active.<sup>12</sup> Lack of exercise is known to contribute to everything from childhood and adult obesity to a higher risk of some types of cancer, from diabetes and heart disease to high blood pressure, stroke, dementia and loss of balance in the elderly.

Parks, trails and open spaces are close by, easy to access and affordable, which encourages more people to use them more often. The more physically active residents are, the more overall physical and mental health improves. The direct result is less need for health care and lower health care costs.

AYUM CREEK REGIONAL PARK RESERVE - This small park reserve protects the stream-fed estuary of Ayum Creek, which empties into the Sooke Basin.

PHOTO BY: Rachel Grigg  
FLICKR PROFILE: Ray L G



## 3.5 reflecting the local culture

*“Places of cultural heritage enrich people’s lives, often providing a deep and inspirational sense of connection to community and landscape.”<sup>13</sup>*

Regional Parks protect many sites and features of great social and cultural value. These sites are both a window into the past and part of lives today. They tell the story about the peoples of the region. For First Nations, the connection to some of these sites goes back thousands of years and has deep spiritual and cultural roots.

### 3.5.1 First Nations

The land and water in many regional parks is important to the First Nations in whose traditional territory these parks are located. The health of the landscapes, plants and animals is integral to the overall cultural wellbeing of First Nations. First Nations have a close connection to these natural areas, which have valued resources, both tangible and intangible, that help define and support First Nations culture. In regional parks, there is an opportunity to work with First Nations in a manner that supports maintenance and enhancement of their cultural

wellbeing and continued connection to places they have valued for thousands of years.

There is an opportunity for First Nations and Regional Parks to work together on planning and managing the regional parks and trails, and to integrate First Nations knowledge into planning and management policies and processes. Engaging First Nations in park management can also show visitors to regional parks some of the richness of First Nations histories and perspectives and the importance of their connection to the land.

LONE TREE HILL REGIONAL PARK - *Lone Tree, a “bonsai-like” Douglas fir, has greeted hikers at the summit of this hill for more than two centuries.*

PHOTO BY: Terry Tuk  
FLICKR PROFILE: TT\_MAC



### 3.5.2 Conserving Post-Contact Cultural History

The capital region has a rich history of post-contact settlement that has helped shape the region as it's known today. Many regional parks and trails contain features, buildings and sites that reflect this history. Protecting and interpreting these features and sites brings to life another important aspect of these parks and trails.



## 4 challenges facing regional parks & trails

ALLRIDGE POINT - *East Sooke Regional Park, Vancouver Island*

PHOTO BY: James R. Page

FLICKR PROFILE: wild prairie man

Regional Parks faces many challenges in achieving its vision and mission. In this section, eight of these are highlighted. The planned response to these challenges is described in Part Two.

## 4.1 managing for growth

Over the next three decades, the CRD's population is projected to increase from 364,000 (in 2008) to 475,000 (in 2038), an increase of 111,000 people. This growth will primarily be seen in the Western Communities and in the Core Area: Saanich, Oak Bay, Victoria and Esquimalt.<sup>14</sup> It is anticipated that the population of the region will continue to increase well beyond 2038.

The region will also see changes to the structure of its population. While the number of people in most age groups will increase, the greatest absolute and relative growth will be among the older age groups.

Population growth and aging of the region's current population through the retirement stages of the lifecycle will have profound implications for regional parks, on everything from trail and facility development standards, to volunteer opportunities, to planned giving. The major implications are:

- Visits to regional parks and trails will increase. The biggest increase in use will most likely be seen in the regional parks and trails in the West Shore, Sooke and Juan de Fuca areas. This will place increased demands on facilities (e.g., space

for vehicle parking, washrooms, picnic sites, camping sites and trails) and services (e.g., bylaw enforcement, environmental education, environmental conservation, and volunteer management).

- Pressure for an increased variety of recreation activities, as well as simple crowding, will create a need for more and more varied places for residents and visitors to recreate. Increased use of swimming beach areas, such as Elk/Beaver, Thetis, Durrance and Matheson Lakes, will mostly likely result in overcrowding and the need

ISLAND VIEW BEACH REGIONAL PARK - *This long, sandy beach is perfect for bird watching, exploring, picnicking and swimming.*

PHOTO BY: Patrick Doheny  
PHOTO SOURCED FROM CRD IMAGE LIBRARY



for an additional swimming beach area in the Western Communities. One such area that could be developed as a beach for swimming is at Humpback Reservoir in Sooke Hills Wilderness Regional Park. It was also heard from the public that there is a desire for more marine beach accesses.

- Pressure to use the existing land base for suburban development will result in the loss of natural areas, greenspace and biodiversity.
- Existing parks will become more valuable as places that conserve the natural

environment and offer residents a place to experience nature, participate in outdoor recreation and get away from urban and suburban development.

Regional Parks needs to plan now to identify natural areas and trail corridors that need to be added to the existing system to meet the short and long-term outdoor recreational needs of residents and to protect the 'green infrastructure' of the region, otherwise opportunities will be lost.

## 4.2

# maintaining ecological integrity

Regional parks represent remnants of the region's original ecosystems. These parks connect to the region's watershed and are an important contributor to watershed health and protection of marine and fresh water receiving environments. It is important to ensure that these ecosystems continue to function, evolve and remain viable over the long-term. Ensuring ecological health is a significant challenge, since:

- most parks are fragments of altered landscapes and do not protect complete ecosystems;

- park boundaries have often been determined by administrative rather than ecological considerations;
- park environments are subject to impacts from urban, suburban and resource land uses on surrounding lands;
- park ecosystems have often been altered by past land uses;
- park ecosystems are subject to impacts from visitors and visitor facilities; and

- non-native species have invaded regional parks, altering their natural character and displacing native plant and animal species.

Regional Parks needs to meet these challenges in order to maintain the ecological integrity within regional parks over the long-term.

COBBLE BEACH AT PARRY BAY - *Devonian Regional Park, Vancouver Island.*

PHOTO BY: Terry Tuk  
FLICKR PROFILE: TT\_MAC



## 4.3 connecting with nature

Outdoor activities play an important role in the lives of residents of the capital region and connect people with nature. The most popular activities in regional parks are hiking, walking, horseback riding, cycling, camping, swimming, boating, beachcombing, fishing and nature study. Regional parks also provide opportunities for group activities such as picnics, festivals and competitive sporting events. These activities contribute to a healthy lifestyle and can be enjoyed year-round.

People are attracted to parks because of the natural environment, and increased use affects the very things those visitors come to enjoy. The challenge is to ensure that there is sustainable harmony between sound land stewardship and outdoor recreation activities. It needs to do so with careful planning, management, education and allocation of financial resources, working in partnership with park users.

Education plays a key role in addressing the protection of parks and connecting people with nature. With the outdoor experiences provided

through interpretation programs, visitors can learn about regional parklands and why they are protected and develop an interest in and connect with nature.

Although some recreational activities may represent a threat to parks, effective communication, through both personal and non-personal media, can foster support for initiatives and management decisions designed to protect parkland and trails. It can also contribute to an understanding of regional and global conservation issues thereby enabling citizens and communities to support

## 4.4 responding to increasing & changing use

best practices in a wide range of sustainability contexts. Education in parks has a unique role to play in connecting people's hearts and minds to nature for the greater good of the bioregion.

Regional parks and trails are easily accessible with an estimated five million people visiting them in 2009. That number will likely continue to increase, leading to crowding and conflicts among outdoor recreation user groups. While use of some regional parks and trails is not yet at the saturation point, Regional Parks needs to address the management of this expected increase, while protecting the natural environment and providing a quality outdoor experience for everyone.

The challenge is to place the right activity in the right area and within the context of the

vision and designated purpose of the regional park system and specific park or trail.

Regional Parks has also noted a change in use of regional trails over the past ten years. These trails are now being used more frequently as transportation routes for people commuting to and from work by bicycle. This is both a positive change and a challenge for the design and operation of the trails.

MATTHEWS POINT REGIONAL PARK RESERVE -  
*This park reserve features steep bluffs with  
spectacular views of Active Pass.*

PHOTO SOURCED FROM CRD IMAGE LIBRARY



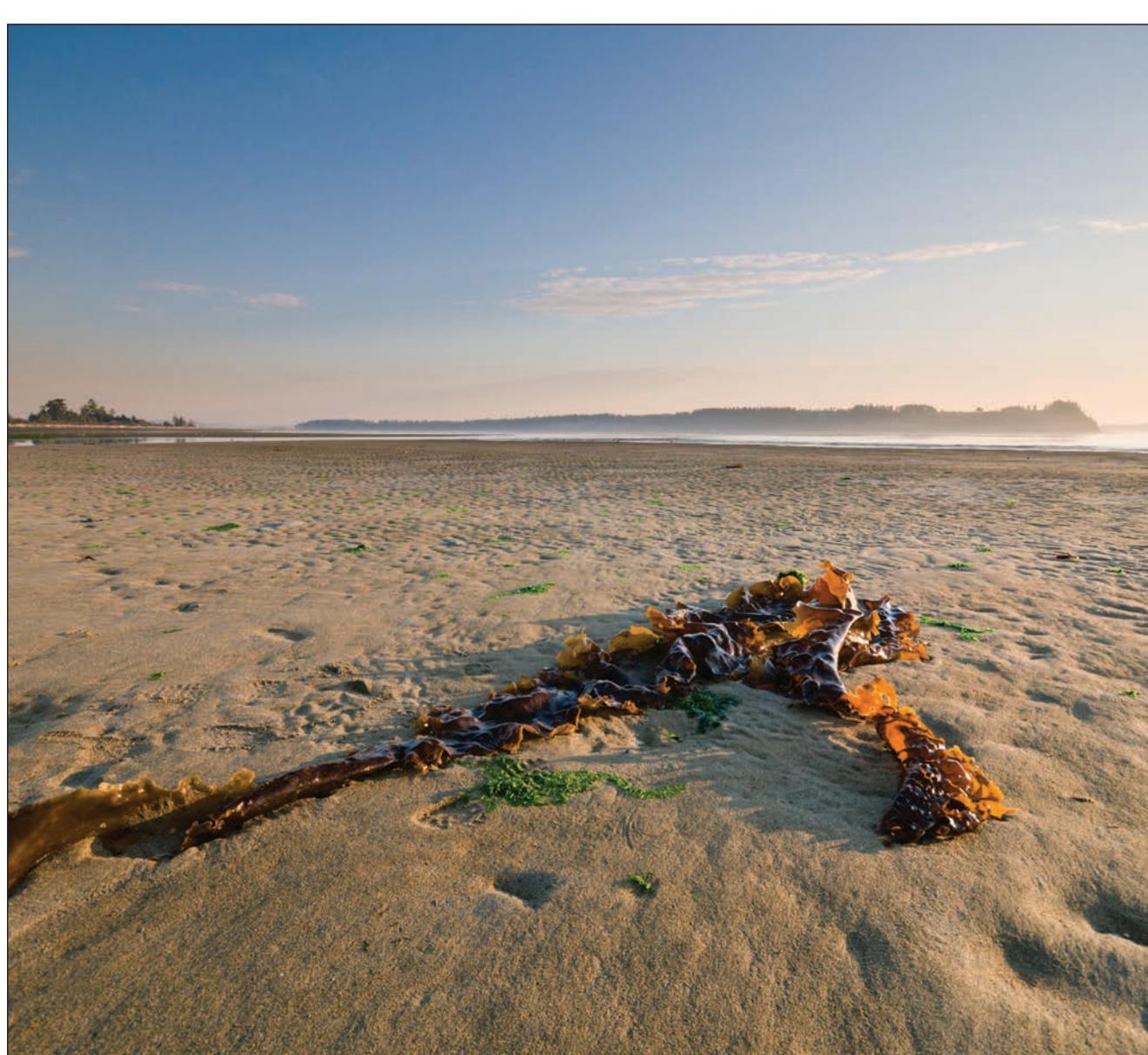
## 4.5 funding existing demand

The many services and facilities that Regional Parks provides are supported primarily through property taxes. The total 2010 operating expenditure budget for Regional Parks was \$9,180,100. Like other public sector park agencies, Regional Parks faces significant funding challenges. Over the past ten years, Regional Parks has acquired 4,480 hectares of land. Some of this land is held in park reserve status and requires services and facilities before it can be opened. There are also costs to manage the land held as park reserve. In existing regional parks and trails, some major infrastructure

needs to be upgraded. There is also increased financial restraint and competition for public money for other regional services, such as hospital facilities, water supply and wastewater treatment. And Regional Parks faces a financial challenge when acquiring land for regional parks because of high property values in the capital region.

Effective financial management of Regional Parks is essential to ensure the long-term sustainability of the system. It is important to examine the capacity of the organization to operate and manage the system in a fiscally

responsible manner, while both providing stewardship of natural and cultural resources and built infrastructure, and ensuring the delivery of excellent services to park visitors. On finalization of this Strategic Plan, a financial plan will be prepared that will comprehensively address all aspects of the funding necessary for Regional Parks to achieve its strategic vision.



ISLAND VIEW BEACH REGIONAL PARK - *The first rays of sunlight on the beach front RV and tent campground on the Saanich Peninsula.*

PHOTO BY: Bryn Tassell

FLICKR PROFILE: Brynn Tassell

## 4.6 acquiring new regional parkland

In 2000, the CRD Board established a ten-year Land Acquisition Fund at a rate of \$10 per average residential household. The fund generated approximately \$1.7 million per year to purchase land for regional parks and trails, as documented in the CRD Regional Parks Master Plan (2000). In 2010, the Board extended the Land Acquisition Fund for another ten years and increased the fund by \$2 per average residential household per year, to a maximum of \$20 in 2014 through to 2019. The Fund will generate approximately \$3.4 million per year at the \$20 rate.

## 4.7

# establishing parks & trails in the capital region by other agencies

In 2010, the CRD made significant acquisitions of private land in the Sooke Hills and at Jordan River. The financial acquisition commitments for those purchases extend to 2015. As a result, Regional Parks will not have significant funds for further land acquisition until 2016.

Regional Parks has identified areas with regional park potential and will continue to work with partners and donors, through the Regional Parks Legacy Program, to add land to the regional parks and trails system.

All levels of government in the capital region acquire land for parks. Collaboration among agencies is essential, so that efforts are not duplicated and so that planning and management initiatives are integrated, wherever possible.

Under current management policy, Parks Canada and BC Parks do not have plans at the present time to establish new land-based parks in the region. Parks Canada is conducting a feasibility study to establish a National Marine Conservation Area in the southern

Strait of Georgia. Parks Canada and BC Parks could potentially add land to existing national and provincial parks. In the CRD's member municipalities and electoral areas, some new parks and trails could be established, but those areas would generally be small and designed to principally serve the local residents. On the Gulf Islands, the Islands Trust Fund has a conservation plan to protect native species and natural systems. This could result in additional land being protected for conservation purposes.



SOOKE POTHOLES REGIONAL PARK - *Picnic or swim at the river, explore the short forest trails or enjoy the stunning vistas from one of several viewpoints.*

PHOTO SOURCED FROM CRD IMAGE LIBRARY

## 4.8 integrating land use planning

For the CRD, this means that establishing significant new parks and trails to serve the needs of the people in the region and to protect the natural environment would rest primarily with Regional Parks. This is especially true for land west of the Sooke River.

Regional parks and trails help define the regional landscape, and it is important to manage them in the context of their relationship with the rest of that landscape. However, the regional parks and trails system is only one part of land use planning in the CRD. It is not part of the Regional Parks current mandate to specifically address the need in the region to protect open space, agricultural land and urban forest or to provide a buffer to suburban development.

Regional parks and trails will be affected by surrounding land use, and in turn, can influence what takes place on adjacent land. It is important to manage land use both inside and outside of regional parks and trails boundaries. This is another reason why it is so important for Regional Parks to collaborate with the federal and provincial governments, the region's municipalities, Islands Trust, First Nations, conservation groups, land trusts and others agencies and groups. This will be critical in establishing species corridors in support of biodiversity.

Planning initiatives in adjacent regional districts also have implications for CRD Regional Parks. In the Cowichan Valley Regional District, trail planning for the Trans Canada Trail connects directly with the regional trails network in the capital region. In Metro Vancouver, the regional trails system and Experience the Fraser program connect with the CRD's regional trails system through the ferry terminals at Tsawwassen and Swartz Bay.



WITTY'S LAGOON - *Forested trails, a species-rich lagoon and a long sandy beach make this park a frequent destination for locals and tourists to the capital region.*

PHOTO BY: Christina Greengrass  
FLICKR PROFILE: Summer Diva

## PART TWO

# 5 goals for regional parks & trails

MOUNT MACDONALD - *Sooke Hills Wilderness Regional Park Reserve, Vancouver Island.*

PHOTO BY: Robin Robinson  
FLICKR PROFILE: [robinnestridge](#)

Regional Parks has two program areas: regional parks and regional trails. Presented in this section are the goals and a classification system for each; each program is based on the vision and mission that are presented at the front of the plan.

# 5.1 regional parks

## 5.1.1 Goals for Regional Parks

Regional parks are dedicated to:

- protecting the region's extraordinary biodiversity in perpetuity, and
- providing for the health, inspiration and education of residents and visitors through human-powered outdoor experiences and activities that foster enjoyment of, and appreciation and respect for the region's natural environments.

## 5.1.2 Discussion

The fundamental goals of regional parks have two complementary pillars:

- to protect the biodiversity of the region and the ecological integrity of the parkland, and
- to provide a range of opportunities for people to experience the land and water.

Both are reflected in the reasons for establishing a regional park and in the management of individual regional parks. Although the two parts of the purpose complement one other, they can – and often do – create management challenges.

## 5.1.3 Protecting the Natural World

The environmental value of regional parks is immense and increasingly significant in this progressively more urbanized and suburbanized region. Regional parks contribute to protection and conservation of unique ecosystems, plants, animals and landscapes. Protecting the natural environment is important because it fosters a healthy environment that attracts people to regional parks.



HARLEQUIN DUCK - *Sooke Potholes Regional Park, Vancouver Island*

PHOTO BY: James R. Page  
FLICKR PROFILE: wild prairie man

Managing regional parks is really about people being in nature and having the smallest possible footprint on the land. When necessary, it is also about restricting people from certain areas so that ecosystems, species and processes can function unaltered without the impact of humans.

Residents of the region have said that while they want Regional Parks to emphasize both parts of the goal, protecting the natural environment remains their top priority. Therefore, the conservation of the natural environment needs to be incorporated into all planning,

management and operational decisions and actions across the organization.

Maintaining or restoring ecological integrity by protecting natural resources and processes, will therefore be Regional Parks' first priority when considering planning, management and operational actions.

### **5.1.4 Outdoor Recreation**

Outdoor recreation and nature appreciation are a significant part of the lifestyle of CRD residents, so providing satisfying opportunities

for outdoor experiences and activities is also a major part of what Regional Parks does.

Regional Parks recognizes that not all types of outdoor activities can be accommodated in all, or perhaps in any, regional parks within the system due to incompatibility with the vision. One such activity is off-road vehicle use. These activities have high recreational and economic value in the region and need designated spaces for this activity to occur outside regional parks.

MATHESON LAKE OUTFLOW - *Matheson Lake  
Regional Park, Vancouver Island*

PHOTO BY: James R. Page  
FLICKR PROFILE: wild prairie man



This could be achieved through partnerships with public and private land managers in the region. The CRD could take a lead role to facilitate these potential partnerships.

### **5.1.5 Regional Parks Classification**

A regional parks classification system is a method of distinguishing the different roles that individual parks play in achieving the overall purpose of regional parks – to provide a range of protected natural environments

and opportunities for outdoor experiences and activities.

A parks classification system is important, because the natural environment in each regional park is unique and has its own degree of sensitivity, and each regional park can only support a certain level of outdoor recreation activity and facilities. Classification helps determine the most appropriate activities for each park and guide park specific management planning.

A classification system also helps to identify gaps in the existing regional parks system, and

the types of parks, natural environments and recreational opportunities that could be added.

Regional parks are classified by their predominant characteristics and purpose. The classifications are supported by management planning documents. These provide strategies to protect the natural environment, and they define appropriate levels of activities.

A park's classification, for management focus, can only be changed by a resolution of the CRD Board.

GONZALES OBSERVATORY - *Gonzales Hill Regional Park features a weather station that is now a heritage building.*

PHOTO BY: Gordon Pritchard  
FLICKR PROFILE: GordonPritchard



Regional parks are classified by management focus. The management focus underscores the different management emphasis for each regional park. These differences need to be acknowledged in the planning for and management of individual parks. The management of land and water within a regional park will be defined in the zoning scheme in the park management plan. Depending on its predominant characteristics and purpose, a regional park falls into one of four distinct management focus classifications:

- Wilderness Area
- Conservation Area
- Natural Area
- Recreation Area

Refer to Table 3 on the next page for full descriptions of these classifications.

**table 3: regional park classifications description**

WILDERNESS AREA	CONSERVATION AREA	NATURAL AREA	RECREATION AREA
<p>A Regional Wilderness Area is characterized by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• a large land base, generally more than 1,000 hectares;</li> <li>• the conservation of ecosystems, with minimal human interference;</li> <li>• opportunities for visitors to experience, firsthand, the park’s ecosystems;</li> <li>• opportunities for backcountry recreation and camping;</li> <li>• the provision of few, if any, rudimentary services and facilities; and</li> <li>• the experience of remoteness, solitude and harmony with nature.</li> </ul> <p>Maintaining wilderness areas in the region is an important part of the regional parks function. Wilderness is critical to sustain wildlife and plants that rely on sizable natural areas for their survival and to provide wilderness outdoor experiences and activities. They are places where residents can experience wilderness close to their home. East Sooke, Sea to Sea Green Blue Belt and Sooke Hills Wilderness regional parks are the sole examples of Regional Wilderness Areas in the capital region.</p>	<p>A Regional Conservation Area protects regionally significant natural environments that contain sensitive and threatened ecosystems (e.g., they will have significant Garry oak, old-growth forest, salt marsh, or estuary ecosystems). They contain rare or endangered plant and wildlife species and their supporting ecosystems. The size of a Regional Conservation Area should be sufficient to ensure that natural features can be protected and remain viable over the long-term.</p> <p>Outdoor activities will be permitted in a Regional Conservation Area, provided they have minimal impact on the natural environment. In most cases, the main activity will be hiking. These areas will generally have basic facilities, such as trails, parking areas, toilets and signage.</p> <p>Examples of a Regional Conservation Area are Witty’s Lagoon, Mill Hill, Francis/King, Matthews Point and Island View Beach regional parks.</p>	<p>A Regional Natural Area protects the natural environment and provides opportunities for a range of appropriate outdoor experiences and activities. These natural areas are not as ecologically sensitive or diverse as those found in a Regional Conservation Area, although they may contain some sensitive and threatened ecosystems. These ecosystems will be identified in the park management plan, and conservation will be the priority in those areas. Regional Natural Areas also protect key greenspaces that are important to the natural character of the region.</p> <p>These areas will try to accommodate a range of appropriate outdoor experiences and activities. The exact uses will be outlined in the park management plan. Examples of a Regional Natural Area are Mount Parke, Coles Bay and Horth Hill regional parks.</p>	<p>A Regional Recreation Area provides opportunities for many outdoor experiences, activities and events, and will be managed to accommodate a relatively high number of visitors. Facilities will be developed to support this level of use. The area must lend itself to development for a variety of uses that meet recreational needs, and it must be able to withstand intensive public use.</p> <p>This classification is distinct from other parks classifications in a number of ways:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The emphasis is on outdoor experiences and activities, although protecting the natural environment will be addressed in all decision-making about visitor use and facilities.</li> <li>• The range of acceptable recreational activities in these areas will be the widest within the regional parks and trails system.</li> <li>• Recreation activities may include competitive sports.</li> <li>• Recreation facilities operated by non-profit groups may be permitted.</li> <li>• Opportunities and facilities may be provided for celebrations such as festivals, and group functions (e.g., picnics).</li> </ul> <p>Elk/Beaver Lake is an example of a Regional Recreation Area. It is the only regional park in the capital region with this classification.</p>

**table 4: classification of existing regional parks by management focus**

<b>MANAGEMENT FOCUS</b>				
<b>REGIONAL PARK</b>	<b>REGIONAL WILDERNESS AREA</b>	<b>REGIONAL CONSERVATION AREA</b>	<b>REGIONAL NATURAL AREA</b>	<b>REGIONAL RECREATION AREA</b>
Albert Head Lagoon				
Ayum Creek Regional Park Reserve				
Bear Hill				
Brooks Point				
Coles Bay				
Devonian				
East Sooke				
Elk/Beaver Lake				
Francis/King				
Gonzales Hill				
Horth Hill				
Island View Beach				
Kapoor Regional Park Reserve				
Lone Tree Hill				
Matheson Lake				
Matthews Point Regional Park Reserve				
Mill Farm Regional Park Reserve				
Mill Hill				
Mount Parke				
Mount Wells				
Mount Work				
Roche Cove				
Sea to Sea Regional Park Reserve				
Sooke Hills Wilderness Regional Park Reserve				
Sooke Potholes				
Thetis Lake				
Witty's Lagoon				

THETIS LAKE REGIONAL PARK - *If you have a canoe, try an early morning paddle and you may even have the lake all to yourself.*

PHOTO BY: Bill Irvine  
FLICKR PROFILE: wjis21



## 5.2 regional trails

### 5.2.1 Goals for Regional Trails

Regional trails are managed to provide:

- an arterial trails system that connects the municipalities and electoral areas of the entire region including individual Southern Gulf Islands and Salt Spring Island;
  - a non-motorized transportation and recreation cycling and pedestrian route on a designated corridor separated from roads, or on a bicycle lane within an existing road
- right-of-way, to connect the communities of the capital region, and the CRD to the Cowichan Valley Regional District and Metro Vancouver;
  - a hiking and walking trail that connects the communities of the capital region and the CRD to the Cowichan Valley Regional District and Metro Vancouver;
  - trails for long-distance horseback riding; and
  - greenways that offer habitat for animals and plants.

### 5.2.2 Regional Trails Classification

Regional trails are classified in three categories:

- bike and pedestrian trails
- multiple-use trails
- hiking and walking pathways

This classification system corresponds to the Regional Pedestrian and Cycling Master Plan.

#### **Bike and Pedestrian Trails**

These regional trails are designated primarily



WITTY'S LAGOON TRAIL - Witty's Lagoon Regional Park features More than 5 km of trails through woodland, past lagoon and marsh.

PHOTO BY: Christina Greengrass  
FLICKR PROFILE: Summer Diva

to accommodate a high volume of users for recreational and commuting cycling, and for walking and running. Non-motorized vehicle transportation corridors for commuters, they are the arterial cycling trails in the region. These trails have major infrastructure and a paved surface.

There are currently three bike and pedestrian regional trails in the CRD:

- The Galloping Goose Regional Trail that runs from Luxton (in the City of Langford) to Victoria.
- The Lochside Regional Trail - 27 km in length, this trail is collaboratively managed

by Regional Parks, the municipalities of Saanich (10 km), Central Saanich (7 km), North Saanich (6 km, 3.25 km of which are managed by the BC Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure, Highways), and the Town of Sidney (4 km). Some sections of this trail are not developed.

- E&N Rail Trail is a multi-use path that will be built within the E&N rail corridor from the Johnson Street Bridge in the City of Victoria to Humpback Road in the City of Langford. The trail will eventually join the future Trans Canada Trail near Humpback Road in Langford.

### **Multiple-Use Trails**

These regional trails are designed for biking, hiking and horseback riding. The surface of these trails will be improved with gravel and designed to prevent degradation of the natural surface area through erosion and runoff.

There is one existing and two proposed multiple-use regional trails:

- The Galloping Goose Regional Trail from Luxton to Leechtown (existing).
- The Trans Canada Trail section in Sooke Hills

Wilderness Regional Park. This trail will connect with the Cowichan Valley Regional District's regional trails network. The section is 13 km (proposed).

- The multiple-use trail identified in the Sea to Sea Regional Park Management Plan that extends from Harbourview Road, to Empress Mountain and then following Todd Creek to the Galloping Goose Regional Trail and Sooke Potholes Regional Park (proposed).

### **Hiking & Walking Pathways**

Regional hiking and walking pathways are regional trails that link regional and other parks into one continuous pathway system in the capital region. They are corridors used for walking, running, hiking and, where possible, horseback riding. These regional pathways are modelled on the pathway system found in Great Britain.

Pathways provide natural greenway connections between parks through suburban land and other landscapes, such as farms

and resource lands. Regional pathways, as a general rule, will be a single-track trail that may, at times, be embedded in and parallel to a regional trail. They could also exist on streets.

Currently, there are four major pathways in the capital region:

- Approximately 10 km of the West Coast Trail lie within the capital region. The trail is managed by Parks Canada.
- The Juan de Fuca Marine Trail is 47 km long. It is managed by BC Parks.

- The Kludahk Trail is approximately 50 km long. It is managed by the Kludahk Outdoor Club through the Recreation Sites and Trails BC and in cooperation with the forest industry.
- Colquitz Creek Trail is 9.5 km long, of which 5.5 km are maintained. It is managed by the District of Saanich.

Parts of the proposed regional pathway system also lie within existing regional parks (e.g., Elk/Beaver Lake, Mount Work and Thetis Lake regional parks).

### **Other Trail Designations in the Capital Region**

#### TRANS CANADA TRAIL

It is proposed that the section of the Trans Canada Trail that lies within the CRD will extend from Beacon Hill Park, through streets in the City of Victoria to the Galloping Goose Regional Trail, and then through Sooke Hills Wilderness Regional Park. This trail will then connect with the Cowichan Valley Regional District's regional trail network near Shawnigan Lake.

#### PROVINCIAL MARINE TRAIL

The vision for the Provincial Marine Trail

Network is to establish a primarily human-powered water trail system along the coast of BC that will become the most extensive water trail network in the world. The primary goal is to provide public access to a series of beaches and upland campgrounds so that self-propelled boaters (e.g., kayakers and canoeists) or users of small beachable water craft have the opportunity to safely explore and experience BC's west coast. Potential sites will include currently undeveloped recreation sites, developed recreation sites, national, provincial, regional and municipal parks

HELVELLA LACUNOSA - *Mount Wells Regional Park,  
Vancouver Island.*

PHOTO BY: Robin Robinson  
FLICKR PROFILE: robinnestridge



(including the capital region), private marinas/resorts, commercial operators, and First Nations. Recreation Sites and Trails BC (RSTBC) is partnering with the BC Marine Trail Network Association (BCMTNA) on the project. The BCMTNA will play the lead role in identifying and inventorying sites. RSTBC will provide support and technical advice, and assist with lands status checks, First Nations consultations, stakeholder referrals and establishing legal tenure on Crown land. Two pilot projects to test the process are currently underway: 1) Gulf Islands and East Vancouver Island (Victoria to

Nanaimo) and, 2) North and West Vancouver Island (Port Hardy to Tofino). The Gulf Islands Section was opened in May 2011.

#### VANCOUVER ISLAND “SPINE” TRAIL

The Vancouver Island “Spine” Trail is a proposed trail from Victoria to Cape Scott at the northern tip of Vancouver Island. This is an inland route that would pass near many communities yet retain its wilderness character, following historic routes and completed trails where they exist. Approximately 700 km long, the trail will provide a recreational adventure route for residents and visitors through the beautiful

back country of Vancouver Island. Primarily a hiking trail, but allowing non-motorized multiple-use, where appropriate, the route will trace mountain ridges, and run through forests and past lakes. This proposed trail is similar to many successful long-distance routes across the world.

The part of the trail that would lie within the capital region would follow the regional trail through Sooke Hills Wilderness Regional Park and the Galloping Goose Regional Trail, through the City of Victoria along streets to Beacon Hill Park.



## 6 the proposed regional parks & trails system

VIEW FROM MOUNT WELLS REGIONAL PARK - *Mount Wells is a 123 hectare conservation park.*

PHOTO BY: Robin Robinson  
FLICKR PROFILE: robinnestrige

This section of the Strategic Plan describes the proposed regional parks and trails system for the next ten years and balance of this century.

Identifying the proposed system:

- helps Regional Parks formulate a land acquisition strategy and financial plan,
- assists in the preparation of park management plans,

- describes to private landowners, First Nations, the governments of Canada, British Columbia and the municipalities of the region, the long-term view of what areas are of interest to Regional Parks and to the region as a whole; and
- links with actions that will be identified in the Regional Sustainability Strategy.

## 6.1 proposed regional parks & trails system

The proposed regional parks and trails system is shown on Map 4 (page 81). This map is a graphic long-term vision of a regional system that recognizes the existing broad system of interrelated park areas, many of which are under the management of other levels of government.

Based on current information, the federal and provincial governments do not have plans to establish new parks within the capital region. Therefore, establishing new parks and trails will rest on leadership from the CRD and Regional Parks.

Realizing this proposed regional parks and trails system will take time. And as new opportunities, information and challenges appear, the shape of the proposed system could change. The process will require innovation, partnerships and collaboration. It will also require financial resources, direction from the CRD Board, opportunities to purchase land, public input, collaboration with federal, provincial, regional and municipal land-use and park-planning initiatives and the resolution of First Nations treaty negotiations.

**Capital Regional District**  
**Map 4**  
**Regional Parks Strategic Plan**  
**Proposed Regional Parks and Trails System**



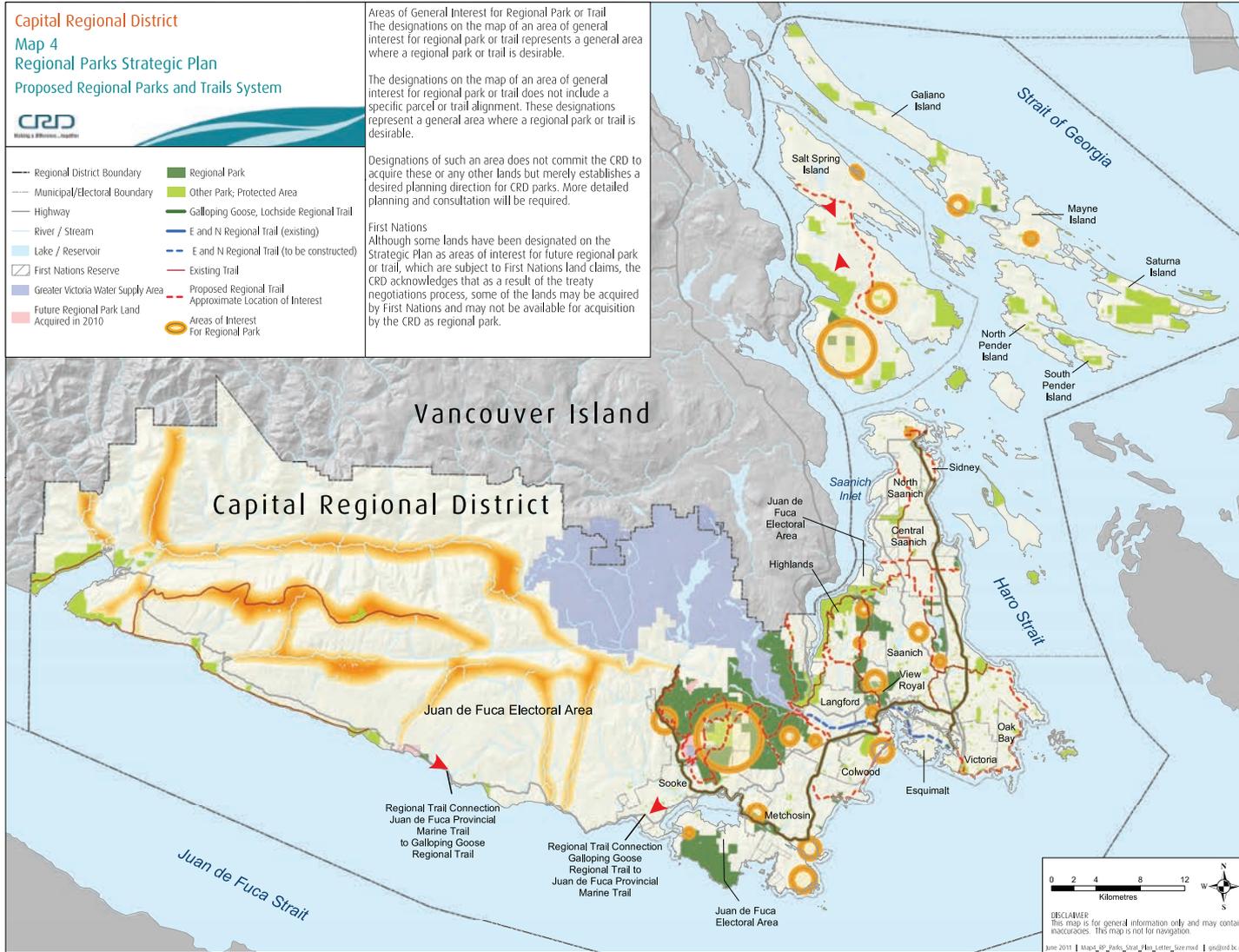
- Regional District Boundary
- Municipal/Electoral Boundary
- Highway
- River / Stream
- Lake / Reservoir
- First Nations Reserve
- Greater Victoria Water Supply Area
- Future Regional Park Land Acquired in 2010
- Regional Park
- Other Park, Protected Area
- Galloping Goose, Lochside Regional Trail
- E and N Regional Trail (existing)
- E and N Regional Trail (to be constructed)
- Existing Trail
- Proposed Regional Trail
- - - Approximate Location of Interest
- Areas of Interest For Regional Park

Areas of General Interest for Regional Park or Trail  
 The designations on the map of an area of general interest for regional park or trail represents a general area where a regional park or trail is desirable.

The designations on the map of an area of general interest for regional park or trail does not include a specific parcel or trail alignment. These designations represent a general area where a regional park or trail is desirable.

Designations of such an area does not commit the CRD to acquire these or any other lands but merely establishes a desired planning direction for CRD parks. More detailed planning and consultation will be required.

First Nations  
 Although some lands have been designated on the Strategic Plan as areas of interest for future regional park or trail, which are subject to First Nations land claims, the CRD acknowledges that as a result of the treaty negotiations process, some of the lands may be acquired by First Nations and may not be available for acquisition by the CRD as regional park.



**map 4**

The concept shown in Map 4 identifies areas of general interest for regional parks and approximate location for regional trails; it is not intended to indicate specific parcels or regional trail alignments. The notations on Map 4 represent a general area where a regional park or trail is desirable. Designation of such areas does not ensure acquisition; rather, it illustrates Regional Parks' desired direction.

Where trails follow on street routes, the Regional Pedestrian and Cycling Master Plan has identified the need for more detailed design. Some areas of general interest for future regional parks are San Juan Ridge, Jordan Ridge, Ford Lake-Cushen Lake-Fulford Creek on Salt Spring Island, and completing boundaries of existing regional parks.

SEA BLUSH - *Sooke Potholes Regional Park,  
Vancouver Island.*

PHOTO BY: James R. Page  
FLICKR PROFILE: wild prairie man

## 6.1.1 Why this System is Being Proposed

The purpose of the proposed system is to meet the needs and values of the region's residents, respond to expected population growth and changing demographics, protect the region's significant natural areas and provide areas for outdoor experience and activities.

The system of regional parks and trails proposed in this plan is guided by the following ideas:

- The vision for this century sets out what the regional parks and trails system could be in 2100.
- Opportunities to acquire natural areas in the region will diminish or be lost entirely as population grows, and as demand grows along with it to change the land use of existing unprotected natural areas.





NORTHWESTERN SALAMANDER EGGS -  
*Sandcut Beach, Jordan River Regional Park  
Reserve, Vancouver Island.*

PHOTO BY: Bryn Tassell  
FLICKR PROFILE: Bryn Tassell

## 6.2 regional parks system objectives

- The population of the region could grow substantially this century. This will have serious implications for sustaining both the ecological health of the region and the health of its residents. This creates urgency to move forward now, to achieve the vision.
- Decisions made now about land use will affect the future of the proposed regional parks and trails system, so the interests of Regional Parks need to be considered in land-use planning and decision making.

The proposed regional parks and trails system shown in Map 4 is based on the following key objectives:

### **Establishing the Entire Regional Parks System**

1. Present a very long-term vision for the regional parks system.
2. Assemble a regional parks system that recognizes and builds on the existing system of national, provincial, regional and municipal parks and other types of protected areas in the capital region.
3. Meet the evolving recreation and conservation needs of residents in the region and the anticipated needs of future generations.
4. Establish regional parks throughout the capital region which are accessible to all residents.
5. Respond to expected population growth in the capital region.
6. Increase the regional parkland west of the Sooke River.
7. Integrate the regional parks system into sustainability plans for the region.

8. Make substantial progress over the next 25 years to achieve the regional park trail system identified on Map 4. Adjust as needed to respond to changing conditions such as new scientific evidence or pressing regional needs. A concerted effort to make substantial progress will also significantly advance the vision of at least half the region's land and water base being managed for conservation.

9. Acquisition of land for the regional parks system is part of the long-term vision for the system and will be considered a priority. Opening new parks or trails for public use will be considered as resources permit.

### **Protecting the Natural Environment**

1. Conserve the biodiversity of the region.
2. Protect areas that contain rare and critically endangered viable ecosystems.
3. Protect natural environments, both general and specific, that are under represented in regional parks and protected areas in the CRD.

4. Connect existing regional parks and protected areas by natural area corridors.
5. Create corridors designed to protect species and their movements.

### **Protecting Cultural Heritage**

1. Conserve cultural features and explore partnerships with other levels of government, First Nations and non-profit groups.



LADY SLIPPER ORCHID - *Mount Wells Regional Park, Vancouver Island.*

PHOTO BY: Robin Robinson  
FLICKR PROFILE: robinnestridge

### **Providing Opportunities for Outdoor Experiences & Activities**

1. Assemble a regional parks system that will provide a range of opportunities for outdoor experiences and activities.
2. Establish new regional parks that provide opportunities for long distance hiking, camping, cycling, beach walking and swimming.
3. Respond to the changing demographics in the region and provide for the outdoor recreation needs of people of all ages and abilities, cultural groups and families.

### **Adding to the Boundaries of Existing Regional Parks**

1. Protect and maintain the natural environments in existing regional parks.
2. Define park boundaries to reflect ecological or watershed units.
3. Provide adequate buffers from activities on adjacent lands.
4. Protect natural environments adjacent to regional parks, to consolidate ecosystems bisected by park boundaries.
5. Expand appropriate outdoor recreation opportunities and trail connectivity.

## **6.2.1 Gaps in the Existing Regional Parks System**

An important part of the Strategic Plan is to identify areas of interest for Regional Parks. To enumerate these areas, it is important to look at the gaps in the current regional parks system in light of three different priorities:

- the management focus
- the natural environment focus
- outdoor recreation activities provided

WITTY'S LAGOON REGIONAL PARK - *Learn about this sensitive marine environment on Marine Day*

PHOTO SOURCED FROM CRD IMAGE LIBRARY



Regional parks and trails do not exist in isolation. Other levels of government also protect the region's natural environment and provide areas for outdoor recreation. Because of that, it is important to examine gaps in relation to other parks in the region, and in relation to the region's security objectives for biodiversity and ecosystem services.

## 6.2.2 Gaps by Management Focus

As shown in detail in Table 4, the significant gaps by management focus include:

- Areas such as Elk/Beaver Lake Regional Park that focus on providing multiple-use outdoor recreation opportunities. These opportunities include freshwater swimming, lake boating, rowing, group picnics, and community events. Opportunities to provide this type of regional park are limited in the capital region, but as the population grows, so does the demand for more and different types of outdoor recreation, such as rock climbing, mountain biking, horseback riding and camping (both front country and backcountry).
- Long-distance hiking trails that link the region's communities and major parks. This would include the trail development in the Sea to Sea Green Blue Belt and Sooke Hills Wilderness regional parks.

## 6.2.3 Gaps by Natural Environment Focus

### General Natural Environments

Ocean coastlines and the land within the Coastal Western Hemlock and Mountain Hemlock biogeoclimatic zone are underrepresented in the region. Overall, the land west of the Sooke River



SITTING LADY FALLS - *Witty's Lagoon Regional Park, Vancouver Island.*

PHOTO BY: James R. Page  
FLICKR PROFILE: wild prairie man

is not well represented in the regional parks and trails system.

### **Specific Ecosystems**

The following specific ecosystems are under represented in regional parks: bogs, subalpine, Garry oak woodlands, coastal bluffs, wetlands, cliffs, dunes and spits. Old-growth forest on lands in the Coastal Douglas-fir, Coastal Western Hemlock and Mountain Hemlock biogeoclimatic zones, should also be considered a priority for acquisition.

## **6.2.4 Gaps by Outdoor Recreation Experiences & Activities**

The gaps in the regional park system by outdoor recreation experiences and activities are:

- swimming beaches
- mountain biking trails
- access to the ocean coastline
- long-distance hiking trails
- camping; and
- winter snow-based activities such as cross country skiing, tobogganing, snowshoeing

THETIS LAKE REGIONAL PARK - *This regional conservation area was established as Canada's first nature sanctuary in 1958.*

PHOTO BY: James R. Page  
FLICKR PROFILE: wild prairie man



## 6.3 regional trails system objectives

The Strategic Plan proposes a regional trails system, as shown on Map 4, based on the following objectives:

1. Connect regional parks to other national, provincial and major municipal parks and trails, key points of interest, major community facilities, transportation facilities and commercial centres.
2. Link with regional trails plans in Metro Vancouver and the Cowichan Valley Regional District.
3. Encourage alternative modes of non-motorized transportation, thereby helping to reduce pollution and greenhouse gas emissions.
4. Connect the urban, suburban and rural parts of the region with strategic consideration given to locating trails as connecting links between communities to enable their use as a viable transportation route for personal and work related trips.
5. Manage the regional trails routes wherever possible as greenways.
6. Connect the regional trails system with the regional cycle and pedestrian network.
7. Encourage green tourism related to economic development.
8. Promote the health benefits of regional trails and value as alternative transportation routes.

The regional trails and pathways system, as proposed, is a comprehensive one. Because it extends through existing parks and connects them with other trails systems and the local communities, realizing this system will require partnerships with the public, landowners,

EAST SOOKE REGIONAL PARK - *This West Coast wilderness park awaits adventurers to hike along the windswept rocky coast, over dry hilltops, through dark rainforest to sheltered coves.*

PHOTO BY: Phil Petersen  
FLICKR PROFILE: Phil's Photos



interest groups, other levels of government, First Nations and business. The network will include trails that are owned, managed and operated by parties other than the CRD, as well as some that are jointly managed.

Part of the proposed regional trails system is included in the Trans Canada Trail and the Vancouver Island Spine Trail. This is the section from Mile Zero in Beacon Hill Park in Victoria, connecting to the Galloping Goose Regional Trail and extending through Sooke Hills Wilderness Regional Park to the Cowichan Valley Regional District.

The actual trails alignment and type of non-motorized use will be determined through detailed planning. The system will use road rights-of-way, easements, abandoned railway rights-of-way and utility corridors. Regional Parks will have a number of roles in bringing the proposed trails and pathways system, including the regional trail route on Salt Spring Island and the Southern Gulf Islands into being:

1. It will advocate that the system be established.
2. It will coordinate planning and the establishment of the system.

3. It will seek cooperative agreements or other partnership arrangements with public agencies, municipalities or private organizations for planning, funding and operating the system.

This will include the major regional trail route on Salt Spring Island and Southern Gulf Islands.

### **6.3.1 Proposed Regional Trails System Plan**

The proposed regional trails system plan is shown on Map 4. These trails provide the



DOUBLE-CRESTED CORMORANT - *East Sooke Regional Park, Vancouver Island.*

PHOTO BY: James R. Page

FLICKR PROFILE: wild man prairie

major links in the proposed regional trails system that extends from Salt Spring Island and the Southern Gulf Islands to Swartz Bay to Port Renfrew and connects to other parts of Vancouver Island, and to Metro Vancouver. Other sections of the proposed regional trails and pathways system extend through Goldstream, Gowlland/Tod and John Dean provincial parks, Mount Douglas Park (District of Saanich), Horth Hill, Elk/Beaver Lake, Francis/King, Thetis Lake, Mount Work, Sooke Hills Wilderness and Mill Hill regional parks.

The key missing links that require attention are:

- routes on Salt Spring, and Southern Gulf Islands
- a connection to the Cowichan Valley through Sooke Hills Wilderness Regional Park,
- the connection of the Galloping Goose Regional Trail to Beacon Hill Park, a link to Uplands Park and Mount Douglas, and then to the Lochside Regional Trail,
- the connection from Thetis Lake Regional Park to Gowlland Tod Provincial Park via Mary Lake,
- the proposed regional trail from Swartz Bay to Gowlland/Tod Provincial Park and Mount Work Regional Park via Horth Hill Regional Park, Victoria International Airport, John Dean Provincial Park, and Centennial and Gore parks in Central Saanich, with a link to the Brentwood Bay ferry terminal,
- the trails system through Sooke Hills Wilderness Regional Park and the Sea to Sea Regional Park and beyond to the Kludahk Trail (San Juan Ridge), and
- the regional trail from the Galloping Goose Regional Trail to the Juan de Fuca Marine Trail.



MOUNT WORK REGIONAL PARK - *Mount Work is one of the largest regional parks, and is the dominant hill on the horizon from many vantage points in Saanich, Victoria and the Saanich Peninsula.*

PHOTO SOURCED FROM CRD IMAGE LIBRARY

This section details how the CRD will manage regional parks and trails under the Strategic Plan.

Goals are identified for each subject area in this section. These goals are important because they will assist in daily decision-making and provide a direction for the future of regional parks and trails. They also create a framework for developing detailed operational policies.

## 7 management goals

## 7.1

# protecting the natural environment

### Goals

1. To establish and manage a system of regional parks that protects the diverse range of ecosystems and species of the capital region, including ecosystems and species identified as most at risk of disappearing.
2. To establish, where possible, regional parks boundaries that follow ecological or watershed borders, with adequate buffers from uses and activities on adjacent lands, and to link regional parks to other parks areas by natural area corridors.
3. To protect and conserve biological diversity and give rare, threatened or endangered species special management attention.
4. To recognize fundamental processes of change in natural ecosystems, allowing them to evolve over time, and permitting natural processes to dominate whenever possible.
5. To maintain and restore healthy, viable ecosystems in regional parks and on regional trails.
6. To minimize the negative effects of human activities on the natural environments of regional parks and trails.
7. To remove non-native invasive plants and animals.
8. To undertake research and management activities that improve the understanding of parks ecosystems and the ability to sustain them.
9. To encourage environmental learning and sharing of knowledge among Regional Parks staff, other CRD departments, other park agencies, the public and research institutions.

MILL HILL REGIONAL PARK - *Garry Oak ecosystem restoration project volunteers (2010).*

PHOTO SOURCED FROM CRD IMAGE LIBRARY



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

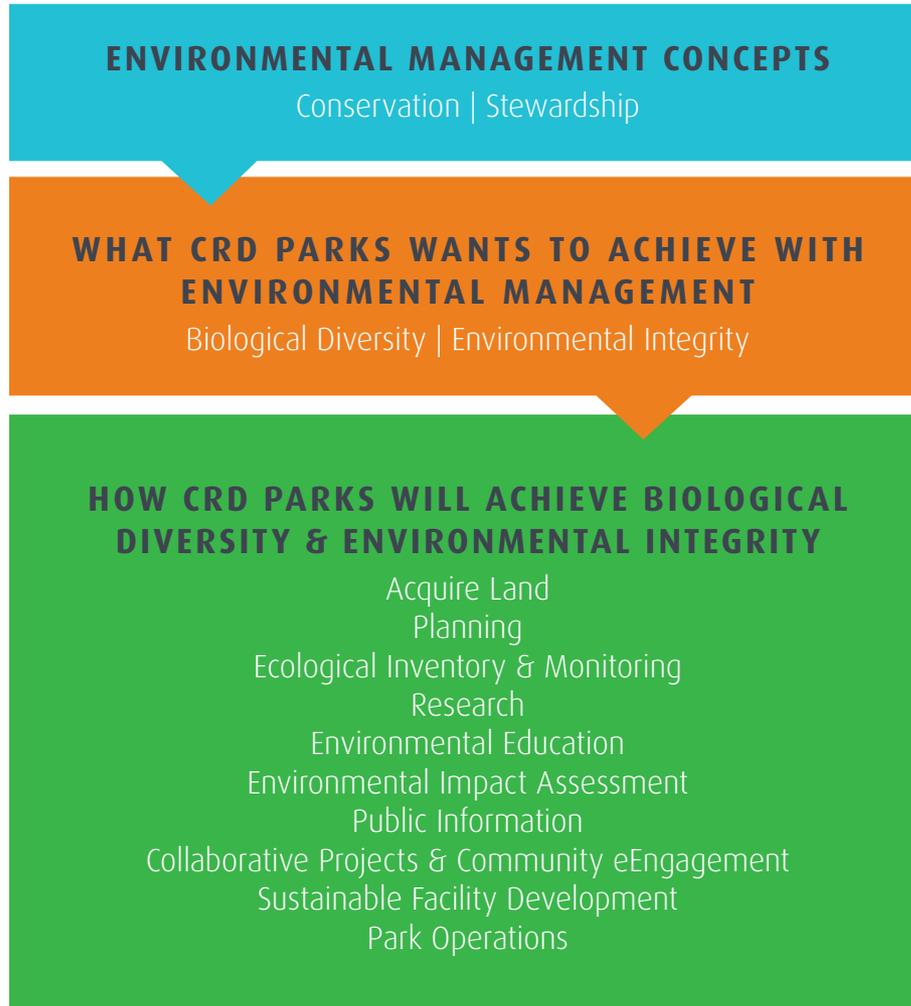
12. To employ best management and sustainability practices as part of Regional Parks' environmental ethic in all aspects of managing and operating regional parks and trails.
13. To employ best land-management practices that conserve natural resources, promote biodiversity and contribute to reducing greenhouse gases.
14. To respond, adapt and prepare for climate change impacts.

To meet these goals, Regional Parks will incorporate environmental conservation, stewardship,

partnership and education into all aspects of parks and trails management and operation.

Environmental management of regional parks and trails is based on two cornerstone concepts: conservation and stewardship. Conservation is the careful protection, use and planned management of living organisms and their vital processes to prevent their depletion, exploitation, destruction or waste, and to promote their connectivity. Stewardship means caring, thoughtful and cautious management of the land and associated natural and cultural values, and passing on healthy ecosystems to future generations.

**figure 4: environmental management framework**



**figure 5: adaptive management model to achieve the environmental management framework**



Sound environmental management of regional parks and trails also includes conducting research (e.g., biological inventories) and environmental impact assessments, and providing environmental education and public information. The environmental management framework is shown in Figure 4. and the adaptive management model to implement this framework is shown in Figure 5.

SUNRISE - *Albert Head Lagoon Regional Park,  
Vancouver Island.*

PHOTO BY: Paul Rioux  
FLICKR PROFILE: Paul Rioux



## 7.2 cultural features

### Goal

To protect cultural resources within regional parks and on regional trails.

## 7.3 visitor use activities

### Goals

1. To provide, for regional residents and visitors of all ages and abilities, opportunities for a range of experiences and activities that foster enjoyment and appreciation, have a minimal impact on the natural environment and are appropriate to the purpose of each park or trail.
2. To provide opportunities for camping in some regional parks.

### Compatible Outdoor Activity

Regional parks and trails have a special role

to play in providing opportunities for outdoor activities.

They have a long history of use by individuals, families and organized groups, but not all activities are appropriate, nor can they be accommodated in all regional parks. An compatible outdoor activity:

- depends on a natural environment;
- has a minimal impact on the natural environment;

- encourages an appreciation for and understanding and enjoyment of the natural environment; and
- is compatible with other park or trail uses.

### **Non Compatible Outdoor Recreational Activity**

A non-compatible outdoor activity:

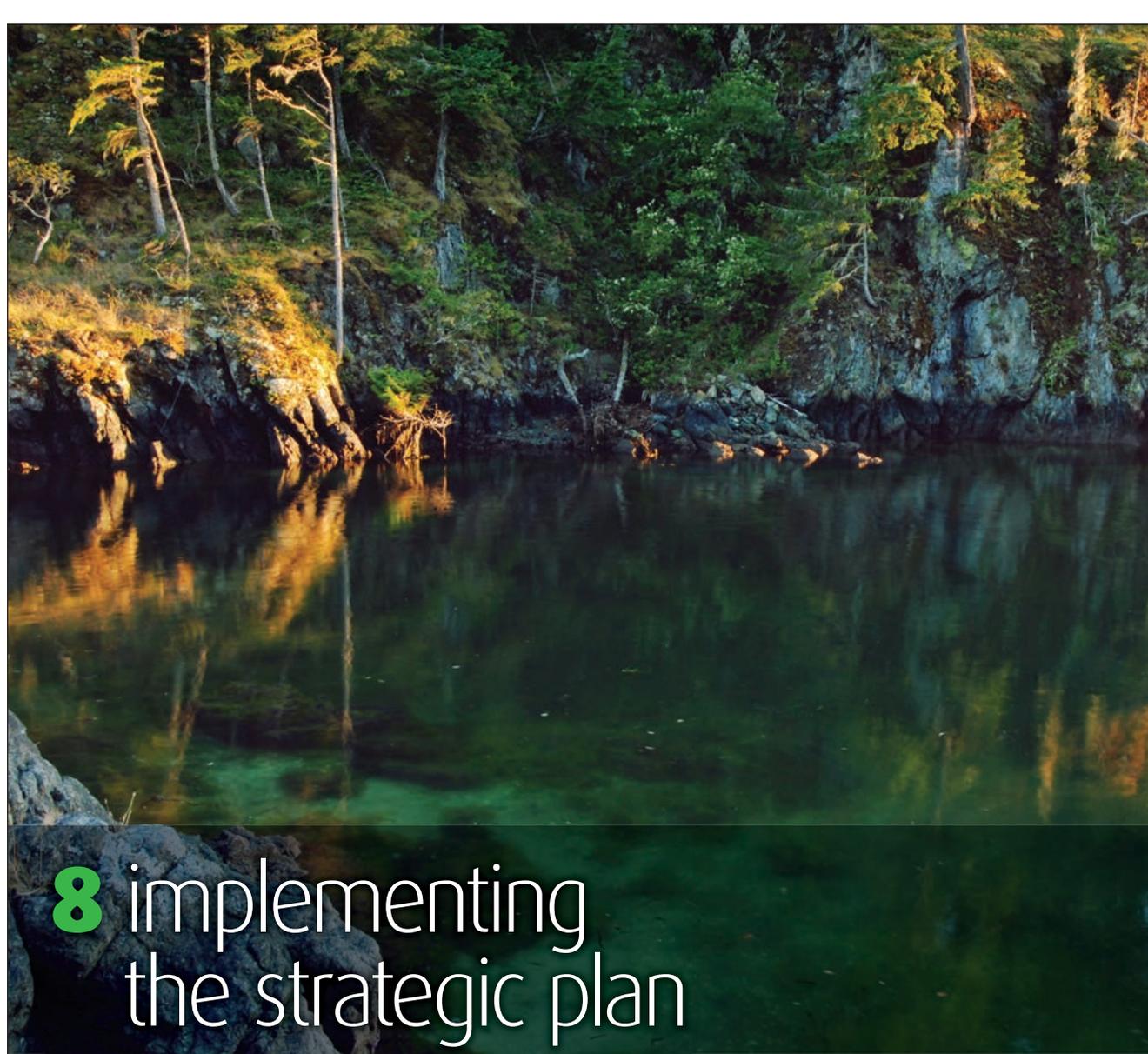
- has a significant impact on the natural environment and environmental integrity;
- significantly interferes with the enjoyment or activities of other visitors;

- causes excessive noise;
- involves the use of motorized vehicles or equipment;
- involves commercial services (unless they are program-oriented, personal services); and/or
- is prohibited by law, bylaw or regulation.

## 7.4 facilities

### **Goals**

1. Design parks and trails facilities following best management practices to avoid or minimize impacts on the natural environment and historic/cultural features.
2. Include accessibility and universal design as primary considerations in any new facility development or upgrading project.
3. Prohibit permanent private sector commercial facilities in regional parks.
4. To demonstrate leadership in efficiency and green building practices.



ROCHE COVE - *Roche Cove Regional Park, Vancouver Island.*

PHOTO BY: Rachel Grigg  
FLICKR PROFILE: Ray L G

## 8 implementing the strategic plan

This section describes how the Strategic Plan is proposed to be implemented, and what the most important strategic priorities will be over the next five years to move Regional Parks forward to achieve the vision and mission.

## 8.1 the significance of the strategic plan priorities

The Strategic Plan defines priorities and actions to achieve these priorities. They provide clear statements about what Regional Parks' focus will be. Completing the actions will be a measure of how Regional Parks is progressing toward achieving the vision and mission. The strategic priorities and actions inform the financial plan, annual business and budget planning and provide concrete direction for annual work plans. The priority statements will be reviewed each year and adjusted as necessary.

## 8.2 the pace and scope of implementation

The pace and scope of implementation will be influenced by numerous factors, some that can be controlled, and some that are beyond the control of Regional Parks. The implementation will be affected by changing circumstances, economic conditions, political direction, other CRD initiatives, and emerging opportunities. Therefore, the proposed strategic priorities and actions focus on the near horizon of the next five years. Regional Parks will monitor the implementation of the actions annually and reset the strategic directions in 2015 within the context of this ten-year Strategic Plan for the last five years of the plan (2016—2021).

It is also essential for Regional Parks to work realistically within the CRD's financial and human resource capacity. A financial plan for Regional Parks will be prepared as a supplementary document to the Strategic Plan.

Approval of the Strategic Plan does not constitute approval of funding for the implementation of the plan priorities.

VIETCH CREEK TRESTLE, GALLOPING GOOSE TRAIL -  
*The Galloping Goose Trail connects Victoria BC to  
Sooke (55 km) and is part of the larger Trans  
Canada Trail that runs from coast to coast.*

PHOTO BY: Terry Tuk  
FLICKR PROFILE: TT\_MAC



FRANCIS KING REGIONAL PARK - *Walk under towering trees on one of the several trails in this park.*

PHOTO SOURCED FROM CRD IMAGE LIBRARY



## 8.3

# how the strategic priorities were set

Setting the strategic priorities for the next five years is affected by both internal and external circumstances.

1. Over the last ten years, Regional Parks has added approximately 4,500 hectares to the regional parks and trails system and established five new regional parks and one new regional trail. Some of this land is held in regional park reserve (e.g., land banked) where no facilities or services are provided. Some of these areas need to be opened as a result of public use and demand.

2. Significant new parklands in the Sooke Hills and at Jordan River.
3. Current land acquisition financial commitments extend to 2015, so the CRD will not have significant funds to purchase land until 2016.
4. In 2008, Regional Parks started the development of the E&N Rail Trail. Additional financial resources are required to complete building and to operate the trail over the next five years.

5. Regional Parks is facing opportunities and challenges to manage existing parks and trails (e.g., increased use, demand to accommodate different uses, demand for new facilities, the need to complete park and trail management plans).
6. Several significant infrastructure projects in the region such as wastewater treatment and hospital expansion will impact the overall CRD budget and in turn could impact the Regional Parks budget.

## 8.4

# strategic priorities from 2012 to 2016

7. The CRD will update its Strategic Plan in 2012 and complete the Regional Sustainability Strategy. The outcome of these two initiatives could affect future strategic priorities for Regional Parks.
8. Major residential development in Langford and Sooke will increase pressure to open parks adjacent to these areas.
9. There is a need to focus on maintaining, repairing or replacing existing major infrastructure such as toilet buildings and bridges.

Over the period 2012 to 2016, Regional Parks will focus on six strategic priorities:

1. Strengthen the management of existing parks and trails.
2. Strategically plan for and open existing land-banked parks and trails as resources are approved.
3. Strengthen community involvement and partnership.
4. Prepare for future land acquisitions.
5. Promote the health benefits of regional parks and trails.
6. Engage in planning for regional sustainability.

### **Strategic Priority 1: Strengthen the Management of Existing Parks & Trails**

#### STRATEGIC ACTIONS

- Upgrade, maintain, repair or replace major facilities.
- Cultivate partnerships, explore new approaches and adopt best practices and technologies.
- Explore opportunities for generating non-tax revenue.
- Complete or update park and trail management plans for priority parks and trails.



GALLOPING GOOSE REGIONAL TRAIL - *Sightseers enjoy carriage rides during the summer.*

PHOTO BY: Bill Irvine  
FLICKR PROFILE: wjis21

- Complete ecological inventories and conservation plans for priority parks and address priority conservation issues.
- Collaborate on the development of a regional natural area connectivity plan.
- Complete asset, maintenance and operation plans.
- Develop an environmental education plan, and provide leadership in a review of interpretive facilities in the region.
- Develop an outdoor recreation strategy.

### **Strategic Priority 2: Strategically plan for and Open Existing Land-Banked Regional Parks & Trails As Resources Are Approved.**

#### STRATEGIC ACTIONS

- Develop a park and trail opening strategy.
- Continue construction of the E&N Rail Trail.
- In partnership with other public agencies, local government and private landowners, initiate planning for the regional trails system on Salt Spring Island and Southern Gulf Islands.

### **Strategic Priority 3: Strengthen Community Involvement & Partnership**

#### STRATEGIC ACTIONS

- a) Engage the community by providing volunteer and educational experiences for people, including youth and families to discover, learn about, protect and restore parks and trails.
- b) Foster and initiate partnerships and expand volunteer opportunities.

CHUM SALMON SPAWNING - *Ayum Creek Regional Park Reserve, Vancouver Island.*

PHOTO BY: James R. Page  
FLICKR PROFILE: wild prairie man



c) Integrate First Nations interests into planning for, and management and stewardship of, regional parks and trails.

- Undertake a visitor use survey.
- Undertake a survey of residents.

#### **Strategic Priority 4: Prepare for Future Land Acquisitions**

##### STRATEGIC ACTION

- In partnership with other CRD departments, First Nations and the federal and provincial

government prepare a sensitive ecosystem inventory for land west of Sooke River.

- Prepare a land acquisition strategy and examine acquisition options to achieve the future regional parks and trails system.
- Prepare a boundary rationalization plan for recent land acquisitions prior to park dedication and declare land that does not have regional park or trail value as surplus and sell these lands. Proceeds from the sale of the surplus lands would be used for further park or trail acquisitions.

#### **Strategic Priority 5: Promote the Health Benefits of Regional Parks & Trails**

##### STRATEGIC ACTION

- Partner with other levels of government and health agencies to promote the health benefits to the community of regional parks and trails.
- Undertake a study on the natural capital value of regional parkland.
- Focus programs on engaging youth and families in park activities.

## 8.5 looking forward: 2012 to 2021

- Provide more accessible opportunities for people of all ages and abilities to connect with nature.
- Partner with CRD Regional Planning to advance Regional Parks interests (ecological, human health, outdoor recreation and education) into planning for regional sustainability.

### **Strategic Priority 6: Engage in Planning for Regional Sustainability**

#### STRATEGIC ACTION

- Bring forward, as part of the process to prepare the Regional Sustainability Strategy, the discussion of the concept that at least half of the region's land base be managed for the conservation of nature.

The focus of the strategic directions and actions in this plan extend for five years to 2016. In 2016, a mid-term check-in will be conducted on the status of the Strategic Plan and strategic priorities will be reassessed for the next five-year period: 2017 to 2021.

2016 will also mark the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Regional Parks; in 2014 planning will commence to determine how best to celebrate this milestone in the community.



PARRY BEACH - *Devonian Regional Park is an oceanfront nature sanctuary and home to a wide variety of birds, especially migrating waterfowl.*

PHOTO BY: Bill Irvine  
FLICKR PROFILE: wjis21

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For more community sourced images of our beautiful regional parks, visit our Flickr photo group **Regional Parks Photography in the Capital Regional District** and feel free to add your own photographs taken in any regional park.

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