

March 21, 2022

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**RDN Announces Completion of the Benson Creek Falls Regional Park Project**

The Regional District of Nanaimo (RDN) announces the completion of the Benson Creek Falls Regional Park Access Improvements project. Visitors can now access all the new features of the park, including the viewing platform and staircase leading to Ammonite Falls. The RDN funded the \$1.23 million project through the RDN Regional Parks budget along with a \$103,125 contribution from Island Coastal Economic Trust (ICET).

The RDN identified Benson Creek Falls Regional Park as a priority project due to its growing popularity and the environmental impacts from increased use. The improvements provide visitors with added parking and more accessible trails to explore the park while also protecting park habitat. Hikers now have a safer, permanent way of crossing Benson Creek and accessing the falls.

Project planning and engagement began in early 2018, followed by a detailed design process in 2019 and 2020. Improvements to the park were underway by the fall of 2020 with the construction of the 40-stall gravel parking lot on Weigles Road and trailhead improvements. A 27 m bridge over Benson Creek and upgrades to the park's steep ravine trails were also part of this first phase. The second phase saw the construction of stairs down to the base of Ammonite Falls along with a new viewing platform, both of which are now open to the public.

Established in 1991, Benson Creek Falls Regional Park is a top destination for both residents and tourists. The trailhead on Weigles Road provides access to loop trails on the north side of Benson Creek ravine to Ammonite Falls. To learn more about the project, visit [getinvolved.rdn.ca/benson-creek-falls](https://getinvolved.rdn.ca/benson-creek-falls) and to learn more about RDN parks, visit [rdn.bc.ca/parks-services](https://rdn.bc.ca/parks-services).

**Quotes**

"We are pleased to see the completion of the Benson Creek Falls Regional Park project. Access to parks is vital to our health and well-being and continues to be a priority for the RDN. Thank you to Island Coastal Economic Trust for their funding support and all who worked on the project, often in challenging conditions." Tyler Brown, RDN Chair

"Our regional parks are getting more popular every year, requiring significant investments to maintain trails and to add new infrastructure where needed. Visitors with a wide range of abilities can now enjoy the many stunning features of Benson Creek Falls Regional Park, including Ammonite Falls, thanks to these new upgrades." Vanessa Craig, RDN Vice Chair and Regional Parks and Trails Select Committee Chair

"This is a significant step forward in making the region's attractions more accessible to a broader range of abilities," said ICET Chair Mayor Aaron Stone. "Sustainable, year-round and low barrier amenities benefit locals, but also attract new visitor markets, strengthening the region's tourism and hospitality sectors."

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## Benson Creek Falls Regional Park Project FAQs

### Benson Creek Falls Regional Park

- Established in 1991, was the second RDN regional park to be established
- 32 hectares in size
- Features a new 27 metre bridge that was fabricated offsite and flown in as one piece via helicopter
- Total number of new stairs: 520 (152 at Ammonite Falls and 368 within the ravine)

### Project Budget

The project was funded through RDN Regional Parks budgeted funds along with a \$103,125 contribution from ICET.

- Phase 1A – Parking & trailhead improvements: \$169,406
  - Phase 1B – Bridge and trail improvements: \$397,557
  - Phase 2 – Ammonite Falls stairs and viewing platform: \$359,803
  - Other project costs (consultant fees, arborists, permit fees etc.): \$301,836
- Total project cost: \$1,228,602

### Environmental Impacts

- The project has an overall environmental benefit for the park by reducing erosion and encouraging revegetation in areas that have been previously impacted.
- Environmental impacts during construction were mitigated through preparation and use of an environmental protection plan and application of environmental best practices such as working within required construction windows and erosion control measures.
- The design considered locations of existing healthy trees and minimized potential impacts to them by re-aligning trails or adding crib stairs. Very few trees were removed and during construction, designs were refined to fit site conditions, further reducing potential tree impacts.

### RDN Parks

- Within the RDN, there are 12 regional parks totaling 2050 ha and 212 community parks totaling 750 ha of land.
- There are also 78 km of trails in 10 regional trail systems.

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### For media inquiries, please contact:

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