

**RDN PARKS**  
*naturally*

# PARKS AND TRAILS STRATEGY



# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Regional District of Nanaimo acknowledges that it is situated on the traditional territories of the Snuneymuxw, Snaw-naw-as, and Qualicum First Nations, who have been deeply connected to the land and waters here for thousands of years.

The Regional District of Nanaimo extends sincere appreciation to all who have contributed to the development of the Parks and Trails Strategy. Throughout the process, many members of the public shared their ideas for the future of parks and trails in the Regional District. Thank you to all stakeholders and individuals who have taken the time to contribute to this plan.

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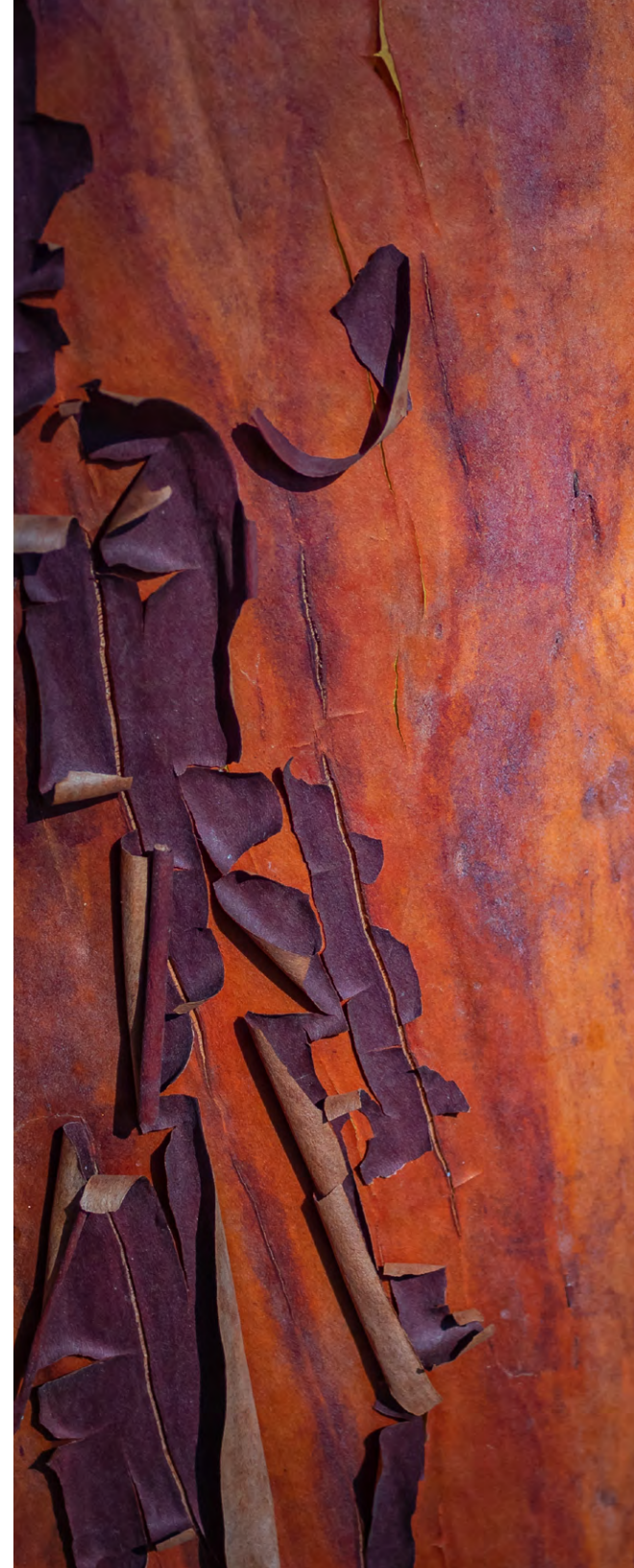
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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Parks and Trails Strategy (PTS) provides a vision and a series of goals that will guide future direction of both regional and community parks services for the next 10 years. It builds on the Regional Parks and Trails Plan (2005) and the Community Parks and Trails Strategy for Electoral Areas E, F, G, and H (2014) to present a unified approach to parks and trails planning, development and management in the RDN.

The Strategy is presented in three parts:

**Introduction** – Section 1 describes the methodology used to review and develop the Strategy.

**The Current Situation** – Sections 2, 3, and 4 present an overview of the regional and community parks and trails system, identify trends and challenges that influence parks and trails in the RDN, and summarize the desires and aspirations for the parks and trails system voiced through the public engagement process.

**The Next 10 Years** – Sections 5 and 6 present a vision and a series of goals and actions that will guide the future direction of regional and community parks services over the next ten years and outline an implementation plan that assigns timeframes and cost estimates to the actionable recommendations in the Strategy.

## CREATING THE PARKS AND TRAILS STRATEGY

The Parks and Trails Strategy was conducted in five phases:

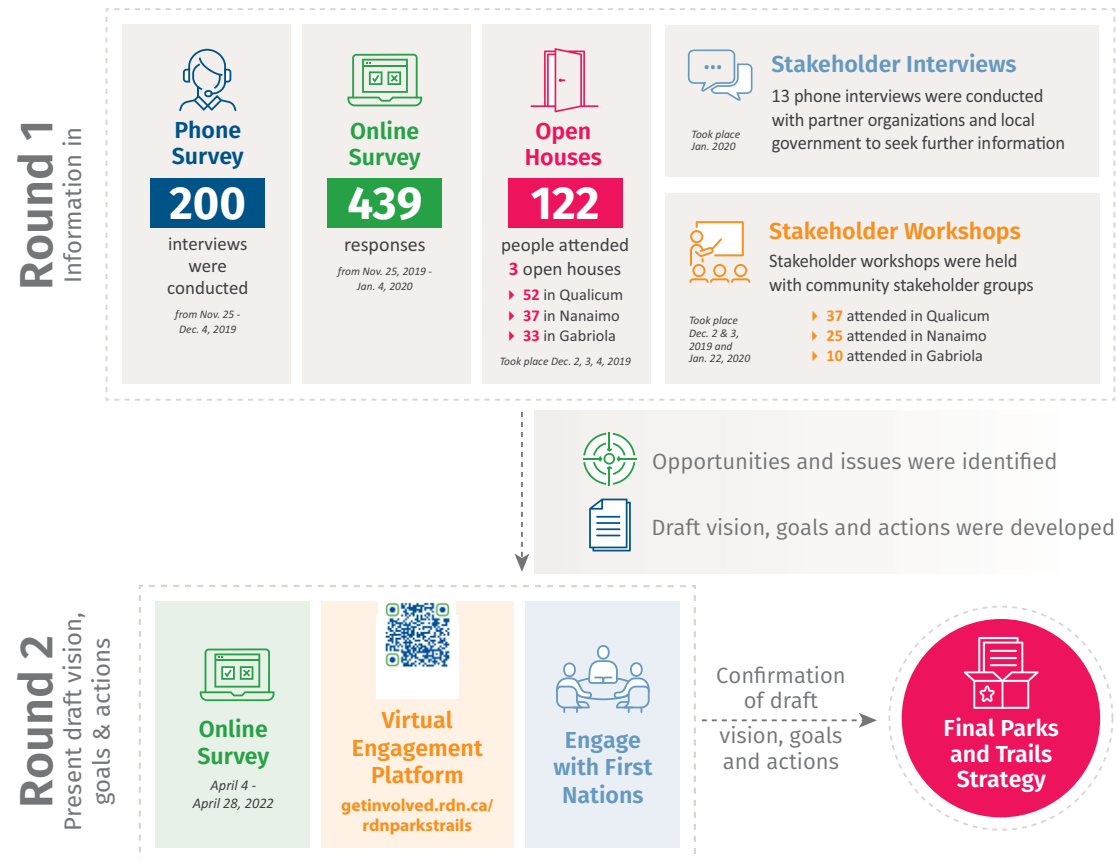
- 1 Analysis of the current Strategy
- 2 Engagement Round 1 – Information In
- 3 Strategy Development and Review
- 4 Engagement Round 2 – “Did we get it right?”
- 5 Finalizing the Strategy

Phases 2 and 4 sought input and feedback from residents, stakeholders, and local First Nations to inform and guide the creation of the Strategy, including a renewed vision and seven actionable goals to guide the next chapter of RDN parks and trails.

The outcomes of this document are based on research, trends, best practices, and an extensive community engagement process. They pave the way for RDN park and trail planning, design, management, and operation over the next 10 years.

# THE PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT PROCESS

The process of developing the Strategy began in September 2019. The first round of community engagement was conducted in November/ December 2019 and included stakeholder interviews and workshops, phone survey, online survey and series of three community open houses held throughout the RDN. The development of the Strategy was paused in 2020 as the community responded to the COVID-19 pandemic. The process resumed in late 2021, and staff prepared a draft vision, goals, and actions for public review. The second round of community engagement was conducted in April 2022 and included a virtual engagement platform, in-person pop-up information sessions and an online survey. A summary of the public engagement process is presented in the diagram below.



# THE CURRENT SYSTEM

RDN Parks and Trails are part of an extensive regional network of parks and natural spaces. This mosaic of parks, trails, and conservation lands protects environmentally sensitive areas and significant landscapes, conserves ecological biodiversity, and provides outdoor recreational opportunities for residents and visitors. Over one third of the parks and protected areas in the region are managed as regional and community parks.

Today, the Regional Parks and Trails system includes 12 regional parks and 10 Regional Trails, covering more than 2,025 ha and 72 km respectively. The Community Parks and Trails system includes over 175 community parks totaling 750 hectares, and 38 community trails that provide 11.5 kms of neighbourhood trail connections to beaches, parks, schools and stores.

The PTS provides a snapshot of the parks and trails system in 2021, including a review of current trends and key aspirations of RDN residents in relation to parks and trails planning and development. It outlines how regional and community parks are funded and describes the committees that support the RDN Board in decision-making on park and trail specific topics.

# ENGAGEMENT OUTCOMES – WHAT WE HEARD

Using surveys, stakeholder workshops and interviews, as well as community open houses throughout the region, feedback was collected to better understand what the community thinks of existing parks and trails. The responses highlighted the following key opportunities and aspirations for the future:

Identify important natural areas and protect them from development through **parkland acquisition**

Continue to **pursue large parklands** because of the significant ecological benefits, as well as public access to more remote, quiet, natural areas (specific locations mentioned were the French Creek Estuary, the E&N Railway, and the Dark Side climbing area, Hamilton Marsh, Nanaimo River corridor, lands around Mt. Benson)

Improve **trail connections** from communities to parks and within communities

Improve **accessibility** of parks (getting to and within the parks)

Improve **information, signage, and maps** to increase the use and awareness of parks and trails

Improve and/or increase **washroom facilities** at RDN parks and trails

Continue efforts to **partner** with other agencies, land managers, and community organizations

Improve **access and management** for a variety of park and trail users

Feedback from the first round of engagement was used to develop the draft vision, goals and actions. These were presented and confirmed through the second round of public engagement.



# VISION

The Vision emerged through a review of past vision statements for regional and community parks in combination with new input from stakeholders and the public during the Parks and Trails Strategy consultation process. This single vision is intended to encompass both regional and community parks and provide a unified approach to the overall parks system.

*Regional and community parks and trails in the RDN provide welcoming and diverse opportunities for people of all ages and abilities to recreate and connect with nature and each other.*

*Through strong local partnerships and collaboration with First Nations, natural areas are recognized for their cultural importance and preserved for ecosystem conservation and climate change mitigation.*

*Regional and community parks and trails in the RDN support the health and wellbeing of all residents in the region.*

# GOALS AND ACTIONS

Seven goals emerged to support the RDN in achieving its vision for parks and trails. Each goal is supported by specific actions to be accomplished over the next 10 years.

Action	Description	Time-frame	Estimated Cost
<b>GOAL 1</b>	<b>Strengthen Partnerships with First Nation Governments, other Governments, Landowners and Non-Profit Agencies</b>		
<b>1.1</b>	Continue to establish and manage land use agreements with private and public agencies for recreational and conservation purposes.	Annual ongoing	RDN staff
<b>1.2</b>	Identify and foster partnerships with First Nations and non-profit organizations to acquire and manage conservation and recreation lands.	Annual ongoing	RDN staff
<b>GOAL 2</b>	<b>Collaborate with First Nations on Park Planning and Design</b>		
<b>2.1</b>	In collaboration with First Nations, explore opportunities to incorporate cultural education and interpretation into park design and development.	Annual ongoing	\$250,000
<b>2.2</b>	In collaboration with First Nations, explore opportunities to protect important cultural and natural areas.	Short	\$50,000
<b>GOAL 3</b>	<b>Identify and Preserve Important Natural Areas through Parkland Acquisition</b>		
<b>3.1</b>	Develop a regional parks acquisition strategy to guide parkland acquisition for conservation and recreation purposes.	Short	\$200,000
<b>3.2</b>	Reassess the Regional Park Classification System.	Short	RDN staff
<b>GOAL 4</b>	<b>Protect and Enhance Natural Parkland Areas through Management and Restoration</b>		
<b>4.1</b>	Update park management plans and prioritize key action items related to sensitive ecosystem preservation.	Short- Long	\$750,000
<b>4.2</b>	Develop and implement an invasive species management plan to rehabilitate, maintain and enhance natural ecosystems and biodiversity in parks.	Short	\$50,000
<b>4.3</b>	Develop a wildfire and risk assessment strategy to mitigate fire risk in regional and community parks	Short	\$50,000

Action	Description	Time-frame	Estimated Cost
<b>GOAL 5</b>	<b>Provide Parks and Trails with Well-Maintained and Diverse Amenities</b>		
<b>5.1</b>	Complete parks and trails master plans for each electoral area.	Short-Long	\$525,000
<b>5.2</b>	Identify, develop, and promote specific areas in the parks system where access for all ages and abilities is available.	Medium	\$65,000
<b>5.3</b>	Assess maintenance requirements and ensure funds are sufficient to deliver a well-maintained park system that meets public use levels.	Annual ongoing	\$300,000
<b>5.4</b>	Support the RDN's development of an asset management system to inform short and long-term budget planning for park asset maintenance and renewal.	Long	RDN staff
<b>GOAL 6</b>	<b>Enhance and Develop Trail Connections</b>		
<b>6.1</b>	Evaluate and update the proposed Regional Trail Network to reaffirm regional trail priorities.	Medium	\$80,000
<b>6.2</b>	Review the implementation of regional active transportation planning initiatives and determine approach.	Medium	TBD
<b>GOAL 7</b>	<b>Increase Volunteering, Learning and Programming Opportunities within the Parks and Trails System</b>		
<b>7.1</b>	Develop and implement a park and trail volunteer program to coordinate and support volunteer-led stewardship projects.	Annual ongoing	\$600,000
<b>7.2</b>	Enhance the ability to offer programming and educational opportunities by identifying and developing additional infrastructure at key parks.	Long	\$20,000
<b>Total over 10-year horizon</b>			<b>\$2,940,000</b>

# IMPLEMENTATION AND FINANCIAL SUMMARY

The Strategy presents a 10-year plan for delivering the actions that support the vision and goals. Most of the actions have a one-time cost to implement, while other actions require ongoing, yearly funding. Each action has been categorized as a annual ongoing cost, or into a short-term, medium-term, or long-term timeframe for delivery.

The overall 10-year cost to implement the actions in the Parks and Trails Strategy is \$2,940,000. Any capital projects or increased operational costs identified through the delivery of these actions will be in addition to the costs identified in the Implementation Plan.

## Summary of Implementation Costs

	Short-term (1-4 yrs)	Medium Term (4-7 yrs)	Long-Term (7-10 yrs)	TOTAL
<b>Annual Ongoing Costs (\$115,000/yr)</b>	\$460,000	\$345,000	\$345,000	\$1,150,000
<b>One time costs</b>	\$800,000	\$520,000	\$470,000	\$1,790,000
<b>Total costs</b>	\$1,260,000	\$865,000	\$815,000	\$2,940,000

## CONCLUSION

The Parks and Trails Strategy was developed over 3 years through a robust engagement process that included open houses, stakeholder workshops, phone interviews and online surveys.

The Strategy presents a series of **7 goals** and **17 actions** that support the key values highlighted by the community.

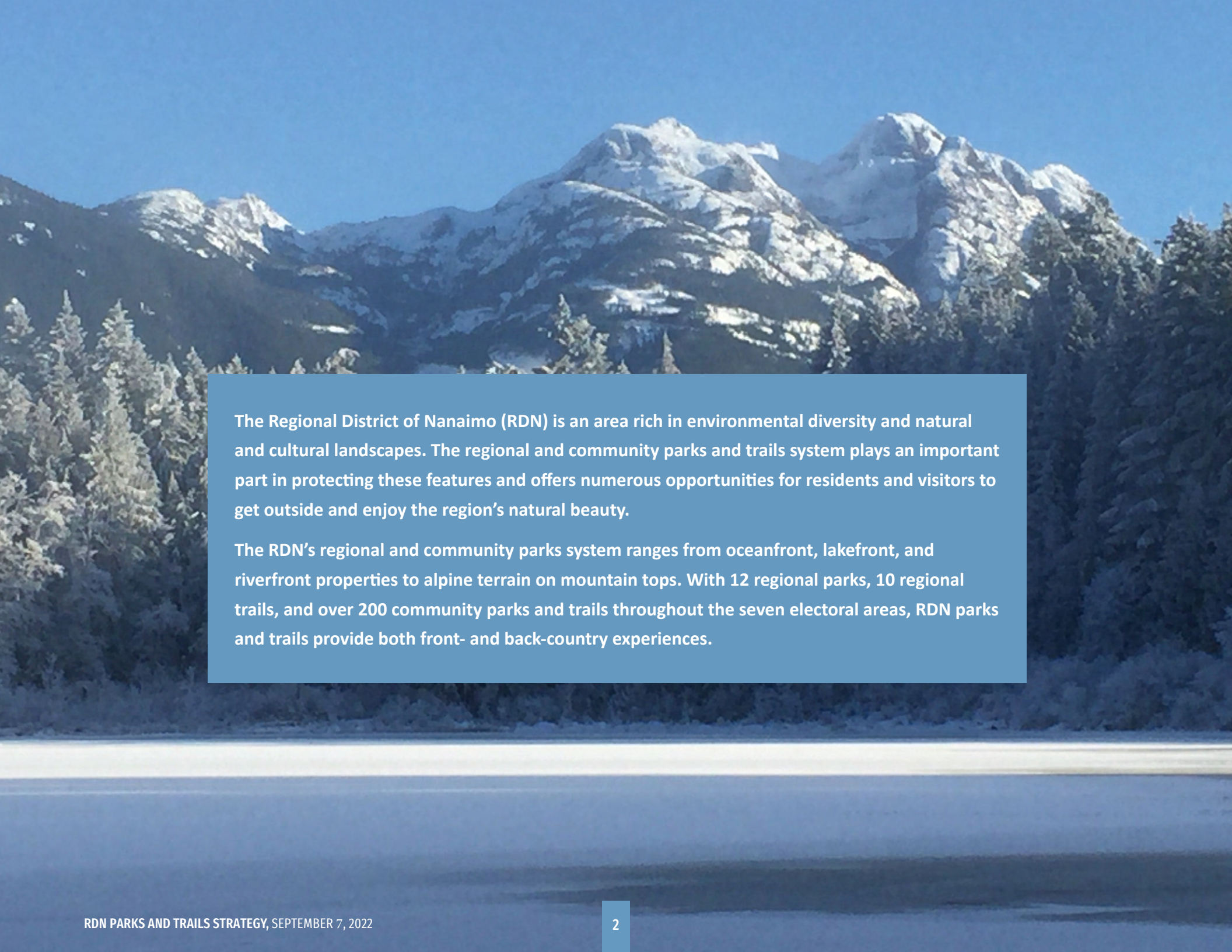
By implementing the actions presented in this Strategy, RDN Parks Services can continue to evolve and expand to support a growing population, while at the same time protecting the diverse and unique landscapes within the region.



# 1 INTRODUCTION

## Content

- ▶ About the Parks and Trails Strategy
- ▶ Strategy Development and Community Engagement Process
- ▶ Creating the Parks and Trails Strategy



The Regional District of Nanaimo (RDN) is an area rich in environmental diversity and natural and cultural landscapes. The regional and community parks and trails system plays an important part in protecting these features and offers numerous opportunities for residents and visitors to get outside and enjoy the region's natural beauty.

The RDN's regional and community parks system ranges from oceanfront, lakefront, and riverfront properties to alpine terrain on mountain tops. With 12 regional parks, 10 regional trails, and over 200 community parks and trails throughout the seven electoral areas, RDN parks and trails provide both front- and back-country experiences.

# ABOUT THE PARKS AND TRAILS STRATEGY

As a result of the last two decades of rapid growth, the Regional District of Nanaimo's parks and trails system has expanded throughout the region and plays an integral role in the greater context of parks, trails, and protected areas. It is now time to look toward the future, develop a renewed long-term vision for the region's parks and trails, and plan for the next chapter of decision-making and investments.

The Parks and Trails Strategy (PTS) considers the entire regional and community parks and trails system as a whole. Building on the Regional Parks and Trails Plan (2005) and the Community Parks and Trails Strategy for Electoral Areas E, F, G, and H (2014), it presents a unified approach to parks and trails planning and development based on research, trends, best practices, and an extensive community engagement process.

The PTS presents an overarching 20-year vision that sets the strategic direction for developing and managing RDN regional and community parks and trails. This vision is the foundation for the 10-year strategic goals and action plan, five-year financial plans, and one-year performance objectives.

The Strategy is presented in three parts:

**Introduction** – This first section describes the methodology used to review and develop the Strategy.

**The Current Situation** – Sections 2, 3, and 4 present an overview of the current regional and community parks and trails system, identifies trends and challenges that influence parks and trails in the RDN, and summarizes the desires and aspirations for the parks and trails system that were voiced through a robust public engagement process.

**The Next 10 Years** – Section 5 presents a vision and a series of goals and actions that will direct both regional and community parks services over the next ten years. An implementation plan, in Section 6, assigns timeframes and cost estimates to the actionable recommendations in the Strategy.

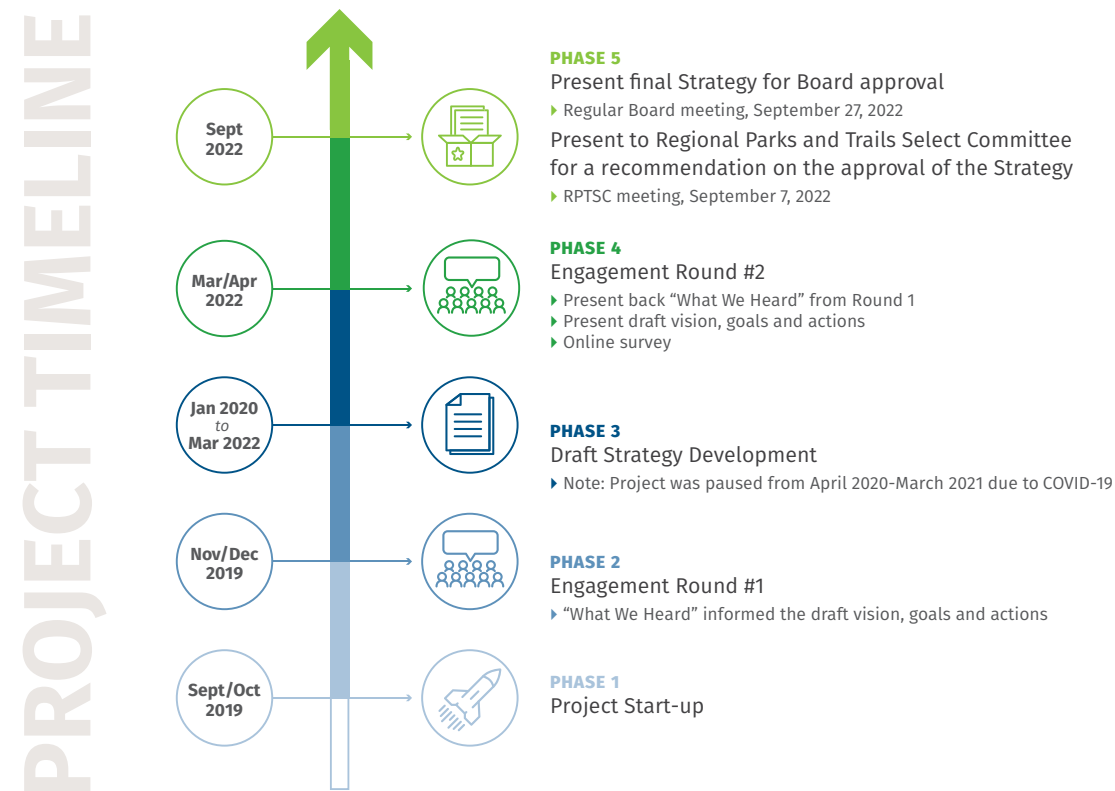


# CREATING THE PARKS AND TRAILS STRATEGY

The review and revision of the Parks and Trails Strategy was conducted in five phases:

- 1 Analysis of the current system
- 2 Engagement Round 1 – Information In
- 3 Strategy Development and Review
- 4 Engagement Round 2 – “Did we get it right?”
- 5 Finalizing the Strategy

The following timeline graphic summarizes the process followed under these phases:



**Figure 1.** RDN Parks and Trails Strategy Project Timeline

The process of developing the Strategy began in September 2019 with the intent to complete the Strategy by November 2020. The first round of community engagement was conducted in November/December 2019. A consultant supported the RDN with the strategy’s initial stages, including background review, public engagement, and preparing a preliminary draft strategy.

Like many processes, the development of the Strategy was paused as the community responded to the COVID-19 pandemic. During the pandemic, parks and trails provided safe places for people to recreate and stay connected, and were essential to residents’ health and wellbeing. Use of public outdoor spaces increased, and parks and trails were required to respond to the new role they played as critical public health infrastructure.

The development of the Strategy resumed in late 2021, and staff prepared a draft vision, goals, and actions for public review. The second round of community engagement was conducted in April 2022. More detail on the public engagement process is provided on pages 5–8.

A summary of “What We Heard” from the community engagement, along with an overview of the current key trends and issues is presented in Section 4 of this document.

# STRATEGY DEVELOPMENT AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT PROCESS

Community members, partners, user groups, the RDN Board, and RDN staff shaped the development of the RDN Parks and Trails Strategy through an extensive series of engagements. Valuable input through interviews, workshops, open houses, and surveys across the region provided important layers of information on opportunities and challenges related to resources, partnerships, funding, and planning.

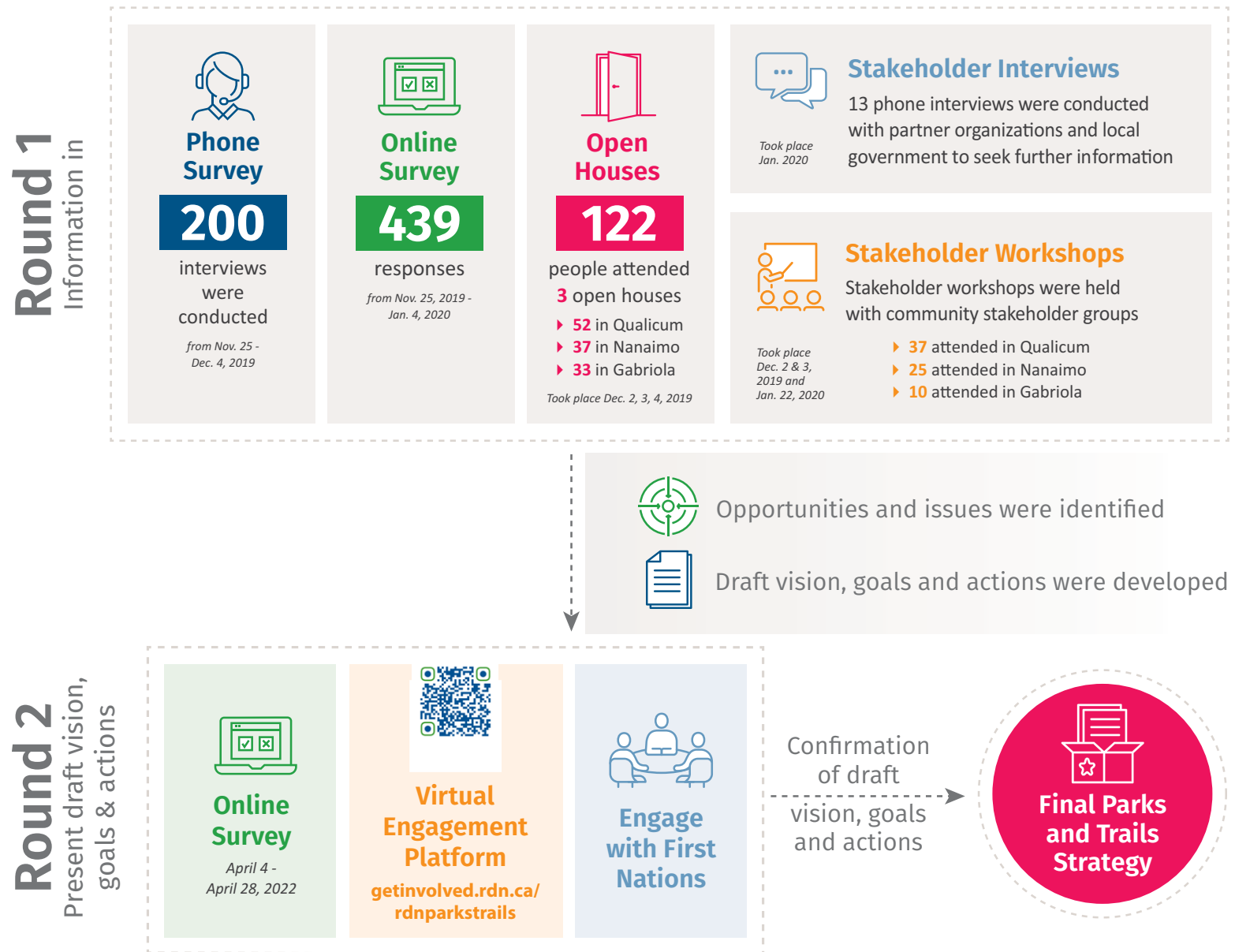
The process of developing the PTS to completion was overseen by a sub-committee of the Regional Parks and Trails Select Committee (RPTSC) referred to as the Parks and Trails Strategic Plan Advisory Sub Committee (PTSPAC). Committee membership included four RPTSC members, all of whom are directors representing the Regional Board. The sub-committee met 8 times to review strategies, results of key tasks and draft material. The sub-committee's input was invaluable to completing this Strategy. In addition, the RPTSC Chair provided input throughout the process.

The RDN reached out to representatives from the First Nations of Qualicum, Snaw-naw-as and Snuneymuxw during the development of the Strategy. Ongoing correspondence will continue to shape parks and trails planning and design in the region.



*Public Open House on Gabriola Island*

# PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT



**Figure 2.** RDN Public Engagement Process

## Round 1 – Information In

The first round of engagement focused on understanding diverse perspectives on the region's needs, issues, and desires. Specifically, the intent of round 1 was to understand what people think of existing RDN parks and trails, determine barriers to enjoying parks and trails, and identify aspirations among community members when envisioning future parks and trails.

The RDN was supported by a consultant during the first round of public engagement. A detailed summary of the process and results is included in Appendix A.

### First Nations Consultation

Letters were sent to the Snuneymuxw, Snaw-naw-as, and Qualicum First Nations to introduce the project and welcome their contribution and perspective on the draft Strategy.

### Stakeholder Consultation

A variety of agencies and organizations were consulted. This occurred in a variety of ways:

- **Stakeholder Email Notification.** 134 representatives of agencies, committees and organizations were initially contacted to inform them of the planning process, where to find the online survey and dates of the upcoming open houses.
- **Stakeholder Workshops.** Stakeholders identified by RDN staff and the consulting team were invited to participate in stakeholder workshops. The workshops included an introduction to the project followed by facilitated discussions in small groups.

Three stakeholder workshops were held:

- **December 2, 2019**, at Qualicum Beach Civic Centre, with 37 participants;
- **December 3, 2019**, at Beban Social Centre, with 25 participants, and
- **January 22, 2020**, at the Gabriola Fire Hall, with 10 participants.

- The consulting team met or spoke by telephone with 14 individuals from 8 different agencies and organizations. A project update was provided followed by a discussion of key initiatives and policies that affect parks and trails, potential future initiatives, current relationships and communications, and opportunities for partnerships to meet multiple goals for the residents of the RDN. The interviews took place in January 2020.

### Community Consultation

- **Phone Survey.** A total of 200 interviews were conducted by telephone with a random selection of residents, 18 years of age or over. Interviewing was conducted on weekday evenings and during the day on weekends from November 25th to December 4th, 2019. Questions for the phone survey only focused on regional parks and trails.
- **Online Survey #1.** The first online survey was open for 4 weeks (November 25th, 2019 to January 4th, 2020) on the RDN Get Involved website and gathered 439 responses from members of the public. Questions for the online survey focused on both regional and community parks.
- **Open Houses.** A series of three community open houses were held at locations throughout the RDN with a total of 122 participants:
  - **December 2, 2019**, at Qualicum Civic Centre, Qualicum Beach, with 52 participants.
  - **December 3, 2019**, at Beban Social Centre, Nanaimo, with 37 participants.
  - **December 4, 2019**, at the Gabriola Arts and Heritage Centre, with 33 participants.

The open houses were drop-in format. The RDN and consulting staff were available to answer questions and discuss the project with the public. Display boards were placed around the room providing opportunity to provide feedback. The Gabriola Island Open House also included a short presentation introducing the project followed by a casual discussion in which questions were answered.

## Round 2 – Information Out

The second round of engagement presented the draft vision, goals, and actions of the PTS and shared ‘What We Heard’ from the first round of engagement.

A digital/online format was used over the RDN Get Involved webpage to carry out the second round of engagement in April 2022. A detailed summary of the engagement process and results is included in Appendix B.

### First Nations Consultation

Letters were sent to the Snuneymuxw, Snaw-naw-as, and Qualicum First Nations, and the Mid-Island Metis Nation to provide an update on the project and welcome their contribution and perspective on the draft Strategy.

Parks staff also attended the March 29, 2022 Snuneymuxw First Nation/RDN staff to staff monthly meeting where staff provided an overview of the draft goals and actions and requested their feedback.

### Community Consultation

- **Online Survey #2.** The second online survey was open for 4 weeks (April 4-April 28, 2022) to seek feedback on the draft vision, goals and actions for the Parks and Trails Strategy. The Get Involved software documented 472 visits to the survey, with 175 survey responses.
- **Email Notifications.** Four hundred and ninety-three (493) RDN Get Involved Parks and Trails Strategy subscribers were contacted by email to provide

an update on the project and encourage survey participation.

- **Virtual Presentation.** With limited opportunities for in-person events due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the draft vision, goals, and actions were presented on the Parks and Trails Strategy Get-Involved web page through a series of short videos and display boards. RDN staff were available to answer questions submitted through the project web page Q&A tab.
- **Pop-up Events.** In-person staff attendance at local community events informed people of the project and encouraged survey participation.
  - *Friday, March 22, 2022*, on Gabriola Island, at the ferry terminals, Madrona Marketplace, and at the Earth Day Celebration at The Commons.
  - *Saturday, March 23, 2022*, at Englishman River Regional Park, Science in the Park Event.
  - *Saturday, March 23, 2022*, at Benson Creek Falls Regional Park, Nanaimo Mountain Bike Club Doumont Trail Clean-Up.

### Stakeholder Consultation

- **Stakeholder Email Notification.** One hundred and thirty-three (133) representatives of agencies, committees and organizations were contacted by email to provide an update on the PTS project and encourage them to review the draft vision, goals, and actions and provide feedback through the online survey or via email.





# 2 SETTING THE PARKS CONTEXT

## Content

- ▶ Existing Parks and Trails System
- ▶ RDN Parks Service Delivery
- ▶ Types of Parks, Trails and Protected Areas in the RDN

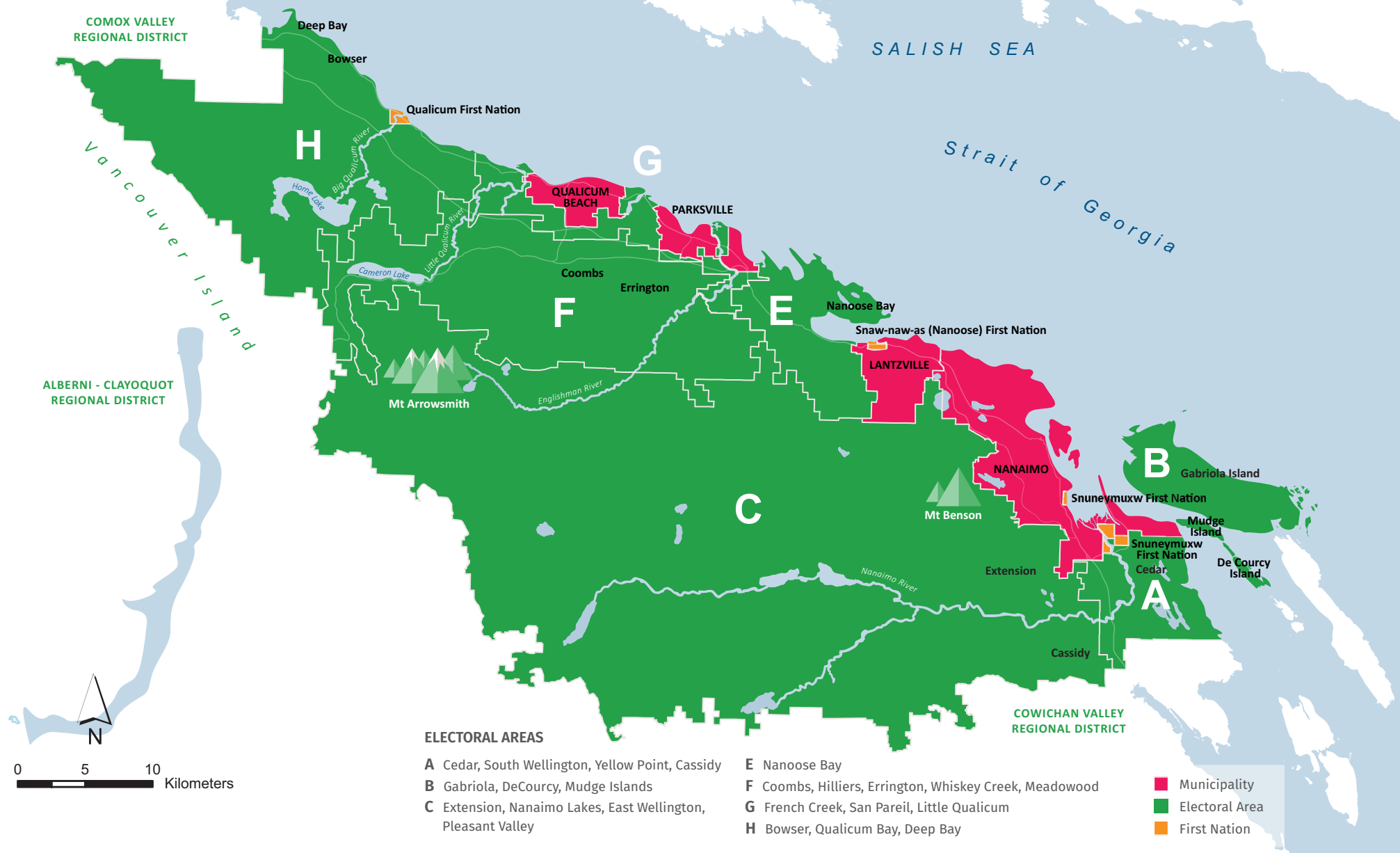


The Regional District of Nanaimo encompasses 2,068 square kilometres, expanding from Cassidy to the South and Deep Bay to the North, and includes the Gulf Islands of Gabriola, Mudge and DeCourcy. This region is located on the traditional territory of the Coast Salish Peoples. Ranging from seashore to mountain top, the lands and waters hold significant cultural importance and include a diversity of natural ecosystems that offer a wide range of recreational opportunities.

RDN Parks and Trails are part of an extensive regional network of parks and natural spaces. This mosaic of parks, trails, and conservation lands protects environmentally sensitive areas and significant landscapes, conserves ecological biodiversity, and provides outdoor recreational opportunities for residents and visitors.

This section introduces the differences between regional and community parks and provides an overview of the other types of parks, trails, and protected areas in the RDN. It also presents the role of the RDN park service within the greater multi-jurisdictional and political context, highlighting the value of strong partnerships in delivering the overall parks service.

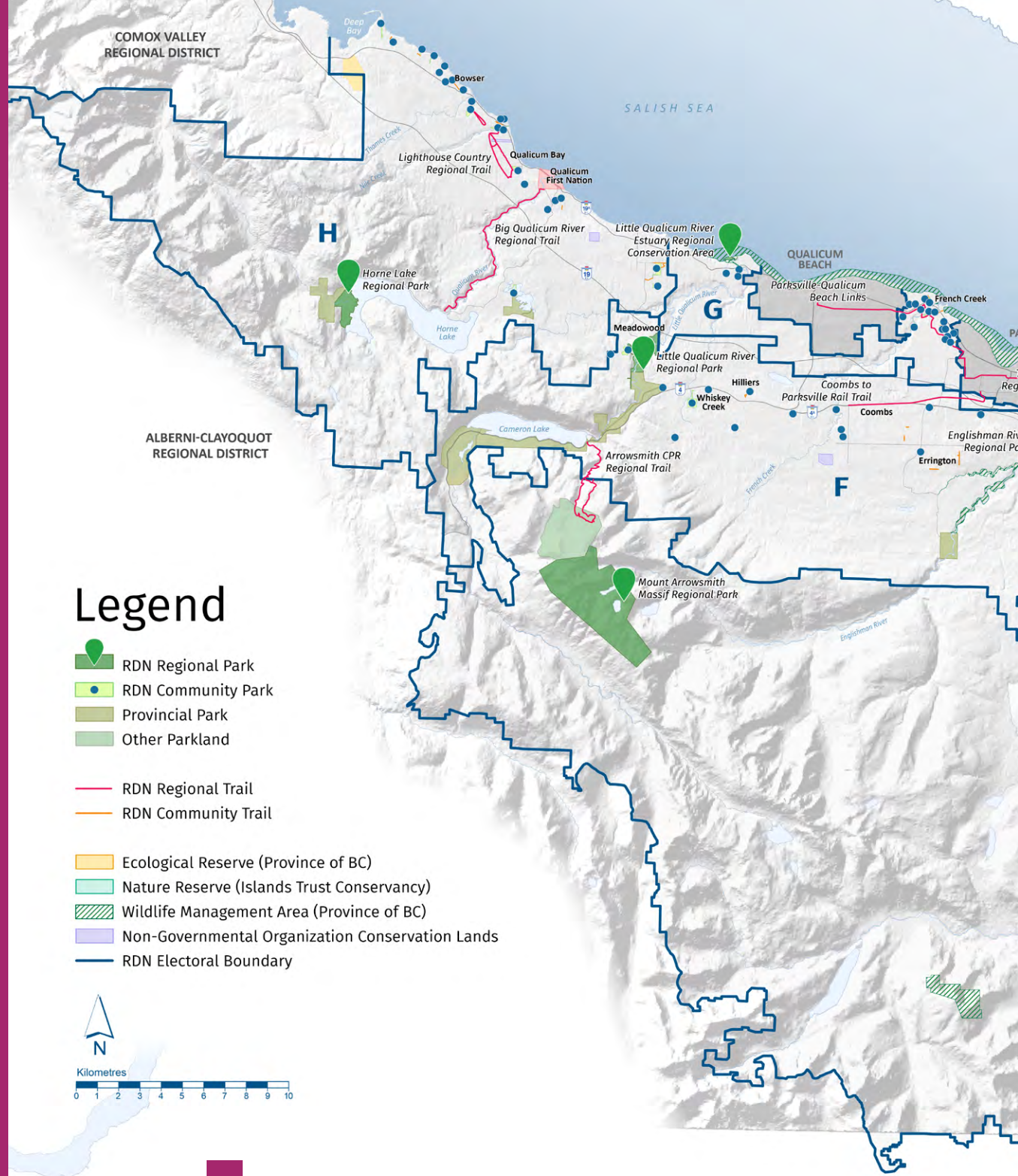




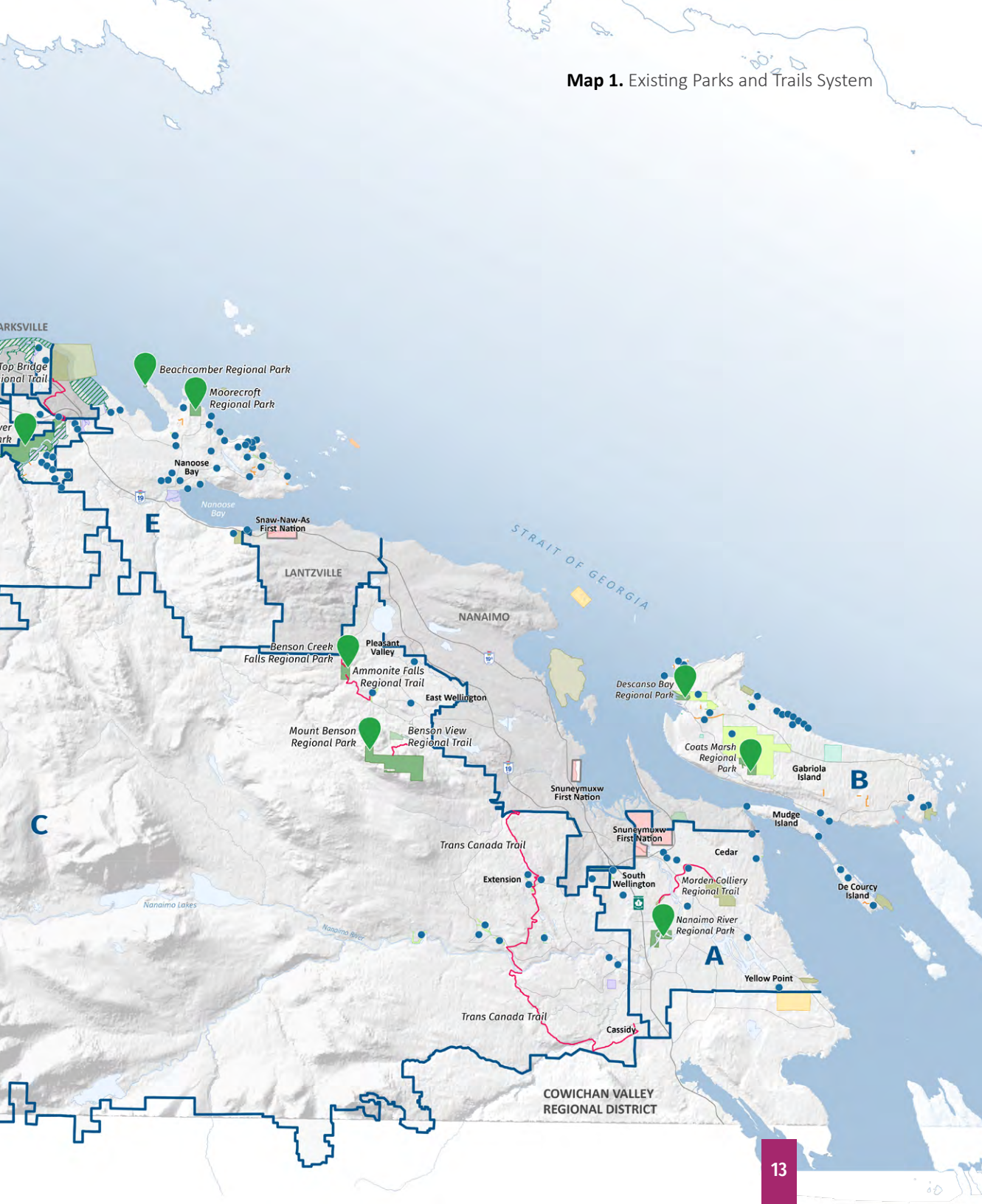
**The Regional District of Nanaimo (RDN)** is one of 27 Regional Districts in British Columbia. With a population of over 170,000 people (2021 Census), it is the fifth most populous regional district in the province. Located on the central east coast of Vancouver Island, the RDN is comprised of four municipalities and

seven unincorporated electoral areas. There are several First Nations whose traditional territories lie within the area of the RDN, including reserve areas for the Snuneymuxw First Nation, Snaw-naw-as (Nanoose) First Nation, and the Qualicum First Nation.

# EXISTING PARKS AND TRAILS SYSTEM



Map 1. Existing Parks and Trails System



# TYPES OF PARKS, TRAILS AND PROTECTED AREAS IN THE RDN

There are four general categories of parks and trails within the Regional District, each managed by different governmental jurisdictions. Other protected areas are also found in the region and are managed by a combination of governmental and non-governmental organizations.

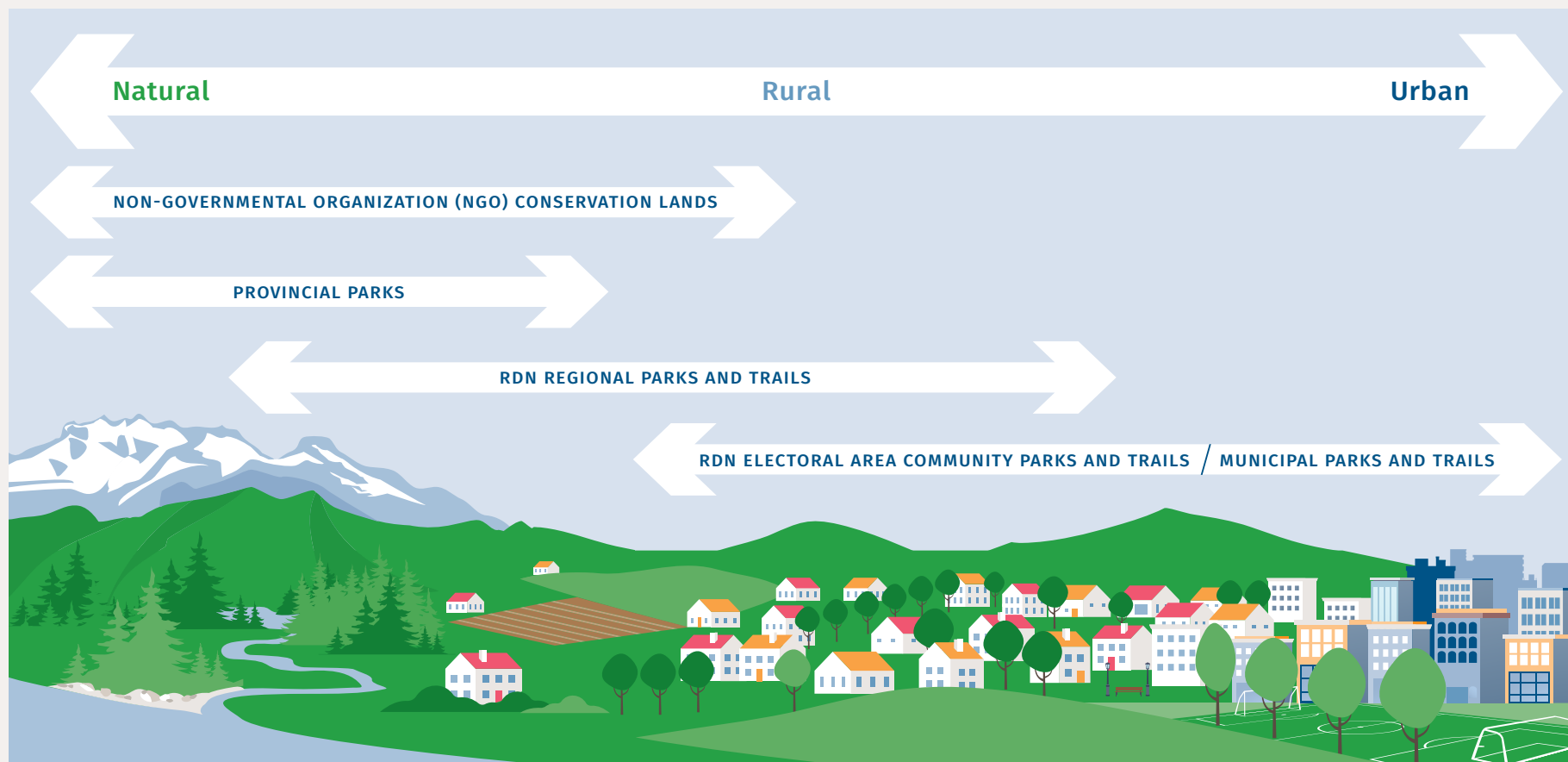
Park and Trails	Management Jurisdiction
<b>Regional Parks</b>	Regional District of Nanaimo (RDN wide)
<b>Community Parks</b>	Regional District of Nanaimo (Electoral Area specific)
<b>Municipal Parks</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• City of Nanaimo</li><li>• City of Parksville</li><li>• Town of Qualicum Beach</li><li>• District of Lantzville</li></ul>
<b>Provincial Parks</b>	BC Parks (Province of BC)

(There are no Federal/National Parks within the boundaries of the RDN).

Other Protected Areas	
<b>Ecological Reserves</b>	BC Parks (Province of BC)
<b>Wildlife Management Areas</b>	Ministry of Forest, Lands, Natural Resources Operations and Rural Development (Province of BC)
<b>Conservation lands</b>	Various non-governmental conservation organizations (e.g., The Nature Trust and the Nanaimo and Area Land Trust).



**Figure 3** visually demonstrates a continuum where RDN parks and trails fit within the greater jurisdictional context of municipal, regional, and provincial parks and trails.



**Figure 3.** RDN Park and Trails Continuum

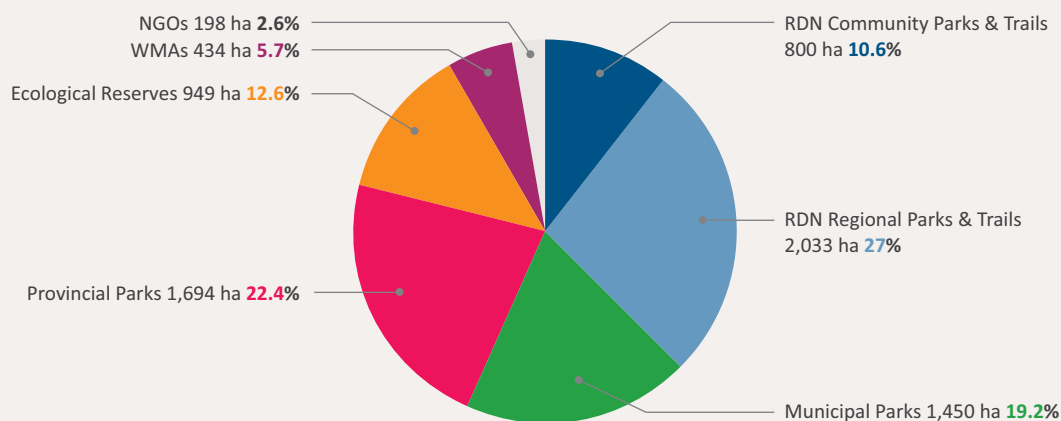
There is a total of **7,558 hectares** of parks and other protected areas in the RDN representing **3.65%** of the RDN's **206,800-hectare** land base.

**Just over a third** of the parks and protected areas in the region are managed as regional and community park.

**Table 1.** RDN Parks and Protected Areas Inventory as a Percent of Total RDN Land Area. Source: RDN GIS Data Analysis, 2022

Parks and Protected Areas	Hectares	Percent of total parks and protected areas	Percent of RDN Land Area
<b>RDN Regional Parks and Trails</b>	2,033	26.9%	0.98%
<b>RDN Community Parks and Trails</b>	800	10.6%	0.39%
<b>Municipal Parks (Nanaimo, Parksville, Qualicum Beach, Lantzville)</b>	1450	19.2%	0.70%
<b>Provincial Parks</b>	1,694	22.4%	0.82%
<b>Ecological Reserves</b>	949	12.6 %	0.46%
<b>Wildlife Management Areas (WMAs)</b>	434	5.7%	0.21%
<b>Non-governmental Organizations (NGOs)</b>	198	2.6%	0.10%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>7,558</b>		<b>3.65%</b>

**Figure 4.** RDN Parks and Protected Areas as a Percent of Total Park and Protected Areas in the RDN. Source: RDN GIS Data Analysis, 2022



# REGIONAL PARKS AND TRAILS

Regional parks and trails, managed by the RDN alone or in partnership with other organizations, are typically large in area and kilometres in length. They tend to preserve or represent regionally significant landscape features or corridors, whether natural (such as mountains, rivers or wetlands) or cultural (such as mining, or railway histories). Two of the RDN's regional parks also function as campgrounds.

Regional trails connect communities and different parts of the region—for example, the Coombs to Parksville Rail Trail, or the TransCanada Trail.

Acquisition of regional parkland most often comes through the purchase or long-term land-use agreements with landowners of properties deemed suitable as regional park (see more on acquisition criteria in Section 3).

Due to the complexities of assembling linear corridors, regional trails are typically secured through long-term land-use agreements with private and public landowners.

Because these parks and trails serve the entire region, funding for their acquisition and operation comes from regional taxes, with all residents of the RDN contributing funds, including those living in the four member municipalities. See Chapter 3 for more detail on regional parks and trails.



*Top Bridge Crossing, Englishman River Regional Park*

# COMMUNITY PARKS AND TRAILS

## The RDN is responsible for two levels of parks and trails: regional and community.

These mandates are administered under separate programs and provide different levels of service within the RDN. The table below provides a brief summary of the differences between regional and community parks and trails in the RDN.

**Table 2.** Overview of Regional and Community Park Differences

	Regional	Community
<b>Key Mandate: Parks</b>	Environmental protection and nature-based recreation	Provision of park amenities for local neighbourhoods
<b>Key Mandate: Trails</b>	Linking parks and communities	Neighbourhood connections
<b>Target Population</b>	All RDN residents and visitors	Local electoral area residents
<b>Tax Base</b>	All of RDN	Local electoral area residents
<b>Typical Park Acquisition</b>	Purchase or lease	Dedication through subdivision or rezoning
<b>Typical Trail Acquisition</b>	SRW*, permit, lease, licence of occupation, rezoning	Dedication or SRW* through subdivision or rezoning; MoTI* permit/licence of occupation
<b>Park Size</b>	Large land areas	Smaller land areas
<b>Trail Length</b>	2-15 km in length	Less than 1 km in length

\*MoTI: Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure

\*SRW: Statutory Right of Way

RDN Community Parks are generally smaller in size. They tend to fill the role of neighbourhood parks in the RDN's seven electoral areas, offering amenities such as playgrounds, picnic areas and walking trails.

Community trails provide neighbourhood level linkages, often less than a kilometre in length, connecting people to schools and beaches or enhancing neighbourhood level walking routes.

Acquisition of community parks and trails often comes through the development of neighbourhoods when parks are dedicated as a condition of rezoning and through the parkland dedication process of subdivision. In other cases, the RDN purchases land or manages privately held or provincial Crown land for use as a community park or trail.

Because community parks and trails primarily serve residents within each respective electoral area, their operations are funded locally by the residents in each electoral area. See Section 3 for more detail on community parks and trails.

# MUNICIPAL PARKS AND TRAILS

Municipal parks and trails are owned and managed by municipalities and offer recreation and green space to residents and visitors. In the RDN, municipal parks are located in the City of Nanaimo, the District of Lantzville, the City of Parksville and the Town of Qualicum Beach. Municipal parks are funded through municipal taxes and serve the municipality's residents.

Municipal parks vary in size, from small neighbourhood parks to large destination parks with amenities such as playgrounds, sports fields, sports courts, parking lots, washrooms and change room facilities. Some municipal parks focus on green space preservation, serving as conservation areas where recreation is limited to passive activities such as walking and nature appreciation.

Since more people live in municipalities than in rural electoral areas, there is a higher tax base to support the development of municipal parks, which is why they have historically had more amenities than RDN community parks.

Trails within municipalities can offer both long-distance routes and short neighbourhood connections. Enhanced regional connections are created when the different jurisdictions take a coordinated approach to trail planning and ensure cross-border linkages.



*Maffeo Sutton Park, City of Nanaimo*

# PROVINCIAL PARKS AND PROTECTED AREAS

There are seventeen provincial parks within the boundaries of the RDN. Managed by the Province, provincial parks, like regional parks, provide public access to unique natural and cultural landscape features and offer a variety of amenities such as campgrounds, picnic areas and hiking trails.

The Province also manages ecological reserves, which have the primary purpose of ecosystem conservation and preservation of the natural features, plants, and wildlife. Environmental research may be permitted; however, public access is often restricted.

Wildlife Management Areas (WMA's) are another provincially led conservation effort that designates land areas for the benefit of regionally and internationally significant fish and wildlife species and their habitats. The Parksville-Qualicum Beach WMA and the Green Mountain WMA are located within the RDN. These areas prioritize the conservation of estuarine and foreshore habitats for waterfowl and fish, and critical habitats for the Vancouver Island marmot.

The table to the right summarizes the provincial parks and ecological reserves located within the RDN.

## Provincial Parks and Ecological Reserves in the RDN

**Table 3.** Provincial Parks and Ecological Reserves in the RDN

Electoral Area	Community
<b>A</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Morden Colliery Historic Provincial Park</li> <li>• Hemer Provincial Park</li> <li>• Roberts Memorial Provincial Park</li> </ul>
<b>B</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gabriola Sands Provincial Park</li> <li>• Sandwell Provincial Park</li> <li>• Drumberg Provincial Park</li> <li>• Pirates Cove Marine Provincial Park</li> </ul>
<b>C</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Haley Lake Ecological Reserve (Restricted Access - Permit Required)</li> </ul>
<b>E</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gerald Island Provincial Park</li> <li>• Arbutus Grove Provincial Park</li> </ul>
<b>F</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Little Qualicum Falls Provincial Park and Campground</li> <li>• Englishman River Falls Provincial Park and Campground</li> <li>• MacMillan Provincial Park</li> </ul>
<b>H</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Horne Lake Caves Provincial Park</li> <li>• Spider Lake Provincial Park</li> <li>• Bowser Ecological Reserve (straddles Comox Valley RD boundary)</li> </ul>
<b>City of Parksville</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rathtrevor Beach Provincial Park and Campground</li> </ul>
<b>City of Nanaimo</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Saysutshun (Newcastle) Island Marine Provincial Park and Campground</li> <li>• Petroglyph Provincial Park</li> <li>• Hudson Rocks Ecological Reserve (Restricted Access - Permit Required)</li> </ul>



## OTHER NATURAL PROTECTED AREAS

In addition to publicly protected parks and conservation areas managed by local and provincial governments, other important natural areas in the region are protected and managed by non-governmental organizations. Ducks Unlimited Canada, The Nature Conservancy of Canada, The Nature Trust of BC, and the Nanaimo and Area Land Trust are some of the active conservation organizations in the region. Research-based institutions, such as Vancouver Island University and the Mount Arrowsmith Biosphere Region Research Institute, also play an essential role in conservation education and other initiatives.

Important natural areas typically contain ecological features and habitats with species that need protection. Public access is often restricted to specific areas within the property or entirely excluded to ensure the land is kept intact and its

biodiversity protected. Some examples of other protected areas within the RDN include Dudley Marsh, Englishman River Estuary, Morrell Wildlife Sanctuary and Nanaimo River Estuary.

It is essential to evaluate whether the RDN can maximize regional conservation efforts when considering future regional and community parkland acquisitions. For example, lands that expand wildlife habitat corridors or increase watershed protection will positively contribute to regional conservation initiatives. In consultation with local stakeholders, First Nation governments, and other governments, more detail is required to paint a full picture of the important natural areas within the region and help prioritize which lands require future protection.

# RDN PARKS SERVICE DELIVERY

*With a vast land base and diverse jurisdictions in the RDN, the management and delivery of parks and trails is complex. The RDN Parks Service carries out many roles and responsibilities, works closely with many partners, and functions within the context of multiple regulatory policies.*

## ABOUT THE RDN PARKS SERVICE

The roles and responsibilities of the RDN Parks Service are broad and range from the day-to-day maintenance of parks and trails to managing capital construction projects and creating long-term parks and trails plans. Parks must balance both people-focused and nature-focused priorities.

Whether trail planning to avoid erosion, invasive species removal to protect biodiversity, or parkland acquisition to conserve sensitive ecosystems, attention to the natural environment is top of mind for the RDN Parks Service.

At the same time, working in coordination with Recreation Services to offer learning and recreational opportunities to park visitors through activities such as nature interpretation programs and guided hikes is also important. People enjoying each other and the outdoors is a big part of the overall purpose of parks in our communities.

Education is the overlap that can foster healthy relationships between people and nature. Some human activities in parks can negatively impact the environment and other park visitors. The creation of new unauthorized trails, dumping of garbage, and vegetation disturbance are examples of activities that can be challenging to manage. RDN Parks Services plays a role in ongoing education to encourage a respectful balance between people and nature in our parks.

In the mid-2000s, park staff included a manager of recreation and parks, a parks supervisor, a parks operation coordinator and a trails coordinator. Project implementation relied heavily on support



*Horne Lake Regional Park*

from local volunteers. By 2021, Parks Services staffing has increased to include: 1 manager of parks services, 2 parks superintendents, 4 park planners and 5 park operations staff to carry out the roles and responsibilities highlighted in Figure 5.

Park planning staff are responsible for planning, researching, and developing RDN parks and trails. Park planners oversee park improvement projects, develop park management and master plans and work closely with residents and elected officials through advisory committees. The parks planning team also engages and consults with stakeholders, communities and partners in park-related matters.

Park operations staff are responsible for coordinating and delivering all park and trail maintenance work. The tasks include park inspections, routine maintenance, tree risk assessments and the coordination of contractors that perform various duties such as the daily opening and closing of gates and the servicing of waste receptacles and toilet facilities.

Two parks superintendents support the manager of parks services. They manage and administer the overall parks and trail portfolio as a team, including budget planning and project prioritization.

In addition to park staff, the delivery of parks services relies on support from various partnerships.



**Figure 5.** RDN Parks and Trails Roles



*Beachcomber Regional Park*



# PARTNERSHIPS

To support the delivery of parks and trails to residents in the region, the RDN has developed many partnerships with private landowners, local non-governmental organizations, and other levels of government. These partnerships help the RDN acquire new parkland and develop, monitor and manage existing parks.

These partnerships are often structured and clearly defined through a formal agreement. Other times, like when a management decision is under consideration, the relationship is on an as-needed basis.

Several types of agreements exist with partner organizations including:

- Conservation covenants with non-governmental organizations.
- Partnership and land-purchase agreements with non-profit societies and non-governmental organizations.
- Acquisition and land use agreements such as leases, statutory rights-of-way, licences and permits with non-governmental organizations, the Province, and private landowners.

## Conservation Covenants

A conservation covenant is a tool that allows a landowner to protect the natural habitat of their land in perpetuity. It is a voluntary legal agreement between a landowner and a conservation organization that defines specific ways the landowner will protect the land. The covenant is registered on title to the land and will remain in place even if land ownership changes hands. The conservation organization plays a long-term monitoring role to ensure the intentions of the covenant are upheld.

Two examples of RDN regional parks protected by conservation covenant are Mount Benson Regional Park and Moorecroft Regional Park.

## Partnership and Land Purchase Agreements

Partnership agreements with non-profit societies or clubs allow local groups of volunteers to contribute to park projects. The intent of the agreements can vary from parkland improvements projects, such as trail maintenance and other improvements, to funding contributions for property acquisition.

Local groups such as the Nanaimo Mountain Bike Club, the Backcountry Horsemen of BC, and the Gabriola Land and Trails Trust are actively helping to improve park and trail networks and amenities.

In other cases, the preservation of land is spearheaded by a conservation organization, often with large fundraising and lobbying campaigns focused on protecting valued natural areas. The establishment of some regional parks has been achieved through partnerships with land conservation organizations that contribute to purchasing the parkland or who own and co-manage the land with the RDN.

Specific agencies with active regional park management roles in the RDN Parks system include: Ducks Unlimited, The Nature Trust of British Columbia, Nanaimo and Area Land Trust, and The Nature Conservancy of Canada.

Building on existing collaborative agreements and fostering new relationships will support and help grow the RDN parks and trails system.

## Land Use Agreements

Many parks and trails within the RDN portfolio exist on land not owned by the RDN. Through various forms of land use agreements, the RDN holds the liability and responsibility for providing public parks and recreational trails over private and public crown land.

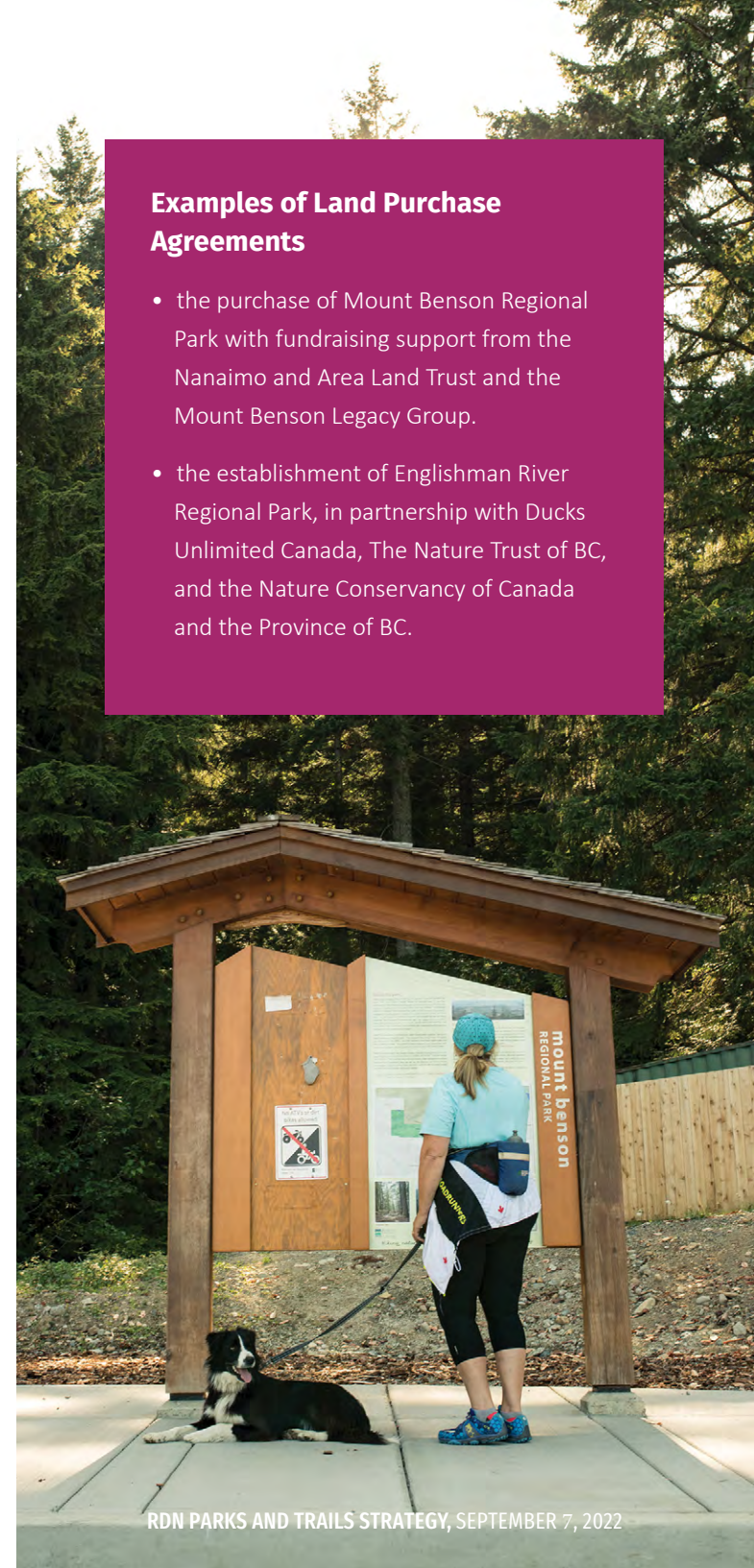
Highlights of partnership success in establishing parks and trails on land not owned by the RDN include:

- Licence agreement with Mosaic Forest Management for the Trans Canada Trail over private forestry lands and with the Island Corridor Foundation for trail by rail uses.
- Lease agreement with the Province of BC for Benson Creek Falls Regional Park over Crown land.
- Permits through the Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure for many community trail connections and beach accesses in road allowances.
- Statutory right-of-way for a portion of the Coombs to Parksville Rail Trail over private property.

Respectful public use of parks and trails is important not only for the enjoyment of other park visitors and the stewardship of the land, but also for ensuring long-term success and opportunities for renewal of land use agreements.

## Examples of Land Purchase Agreements

- the purchase of Mount Benson Regional Park with fundraising support from the Nanaimo and Area Land Trust and the Mount Benson Legacy Group.
- the establishment of Englishman River Regional Park, in partnership with Ducks Unlimited Canada, The Nature Trust of BC, and the Nature Conservancy of Canada and the Province of BC.





*Brickyard Community Park, Area E*

# POLICY AND LEGISLATIVE CONTEXT

This section discusses the backdrop of regional and community parks in the Regional District of Nanaimo.

## Links to other RDN Plans

At the local level, regional and community parks and trails are influenced by several overarching policies and plans of the RDN, such as the Board Strategic Plan and the Regional Growth Strategy (RGS). In turn, the content of the Parks and Trails Strategy will influence updates and initiatives in other RDN plans and policies.

## RDN Board Strategic Plan 2019-2022

At the highest-level, the Board Strategic Plan guides elected officials as they make policy and regulatory decisions during their term. The Plan identifies priorities that influence the delivery of parks and trails, including climate change, protecting and acquiring land for environmental preservation and parkland, land-use planning and asset management, developing an active transportation network, seeking partnership opportunities with other governmental agencies and community and stakeholder groups, and making the region a safe and vibrant place for all. These priorities drive departmental work plans and resource allocations.

## RDN's Regional Growth Strategy (RGS)

The RGS defines a regional vision for sustainable growth and links to the PTS in numerous ways. The RGS highlights the importance of complete communities with access to natural areas and recreational opportunities; expansion and enhancement of mobility options that reduce automobile dependency; and a strong and resilient economy based on several factors including natural resource assets and tourism.

Key RGS Principles that are integral to parks and trails:

- The interconnectedness and interdependence of natural and human systems are recognized and respected;
- The healthy functioning of ecological systems is nurtured;
- Equity amongst all citizens and across generations, including future generations is ensured;
- The qualities of place that create pride and a sense of community are nurtured; and
- Decision-making processes that are based on participation, collaboration and cooperation with citizens, other authorities and organizations.

The RGS identifies targets for increasing the amount of land in protected areas, increasing the amount of publicly owned land designated for parks and community use, and increasing the total length of maintained trails.

### Official Community Plans

Official Community Plans (OCPs) guide land use and development decisions and provide detailed planning direction for community development. Each electoral area has an OCP, and some also have supporting active transportation plans that guide active transportation improvements in the community.

The current OCPs vary in the amount of direction provided on the acquisition and development of community parks and trails. Additional guidance is required to develop strong community park development, acquisition and trail network planning to support the OCPs.

## The Role of Parks in Protecting the Environment

Regional parks have a dual mandate- they represent and protect regionally significant areas and provide outdoor recreational opportunities.

Community parks also perform multiple functions. While the primary focus of community parks is to provide local outdoor recreational amenities, these properties can also play a role in protecting local environmentally significant areas.

When it comes to environmental protection, parkland acquisition is only one method used by the RDN. The Regional and Community Park and Trails System needs to be considered within the larger land-use management context. The RDN uses a range of land use planning and regulatory tools to achieve responsible land use and environmental protection on public and private lands:

- **The Regional Growth Strategy (RGS)** provides the broad regional vision, goals, and policies for managing growth and development.
- **Official Community Plans (OCPs)** provide long-term plans for specific areas, including goals and policies for environmental protection.
- **OCPs designate Development Permit Areas (DPAs)** to protect environmentally significant sites or types of areas. For example, DPAs along watercourses protect their riparian zones.
- **Zoning Bylaws** establish setbacks from environmentally sensitive features such as watercourses and nest trees.
- As part of re-zoning, subdivision, and development permit approvals, **the RDN** can place restrictive covenants on land parcels to protect environmental features.

The acquisition of parkland is only one tool to help protect environmentally significant sites, wildlife habitats, and corridors in the region. Ultimately, ecologically-based land use planning and management are the primary methods for environmental protection.

## Regional Land Use Planning and Regulations

In addition to reviewing the federal and provincial legislation at the onset of park and trail projects, local RDN plans, policies and regulations are also examined to uncover synchronicities that result in a strong project that is well-supported by the community and the Regional Board.

Examples of federal and provincial legislation and local bylaws that must be considered at the onset of project planning to ensure appropriate park and trail design and development include:

Federal	Provincial	Regional
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Fisheries Act</li><li>• Wildlife Act</li><li>• Species at Risk Act</li><li>• Migratory Birds Convention Act</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Forest and Range Practices Act</li><li>• Water Sustainability Act</li><li>• Riparian Areas Protection Act</li><li>• Agricultural Land Commission Act</li><li>• Heritage Conservation Act</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• OCP Development Permit Areas</li><li>• Zoning bylaws</li><li>• Building permits</li></ul>

Parks Services often works with specialized consultants such as biologists, engineers, architects, and archaeologists to assist with the regulatory processes for complex park projects.




Brickyard Community Park, Area E

# 3 RDN PARKS AND TRAILS SYSTEM

## **Content**

► RDN Parks - A Look Back

► RDN Parks - Today



# RDN PARKS – A LOOK BACK

This section dives into the details of the RDN's regional and community parks and trails system, beginning with a review of how it all began.

# REGIONAL PARKS AND TRAILS 1989 - 2021

The RDN's Regional Parks function originated in 1989 when the Province gave the RDN authority to establish regional parks under the then Park (Regional) Act. In 2001, the Regional District converted the function to a Regional Parks and Trails Service (Bylaw 1231), as provided within the framework of the Local Government Act.

For the first decade, the Regional Parks function only received funding from the electoral areas.

The first two regional parks were Beachcomber (Electoral Area E) and Benson Creek Falls (Electoral Area C).

## Regional Parks System Plan (1995 - 2004)

The vision for the service was first presented in the 1995 *Regional Parks System Plan*. This plan identified a list of potential acquisition sites and introduced the concepts of a series of regional and community trail systems and an interconnected island trail system.

**The first Regional Parks Plan (1995) presented a vision of a regional parks system that secures, protects and stewards lands within the region that maintains livability, provides environmental and natural resource protection and accommodates outdoor recreational pursuits.**

One of the first actions following the adoption of the Parks Plan was implementing the District 69 Trail System Development Plan (1998-2000) as a pilot program. This program was a great success and eventually evolved into a region-wide regional trail concept based on building a 'trail from park to park.'

Then in 1998, the Board adopted an ambitious 7-year plan for acquiring up to 9 regional park sites. The Regional Parks Acquisition Program (1999-2005) focused on specific priority sites selected through recommendations from the Regional Parks System Plan, RDN Board of Directors, community members and landowners. This Acquisition Program continued to evolve as properties were acquired and new opportunities arose.

By 2005, the RDN's regional parks system had grown from 2 small parks to 8 regional parks, totaling more than 240 hectares. The regional trails system had 7 trails with over 68 km of developed trails with new bridges making many of the trail connections possible.

**The first three regional trail projects were: Rathtrevor to Top Bridge, Parksville Qualicum Beach Links, and the north loop of the Lighthouse Country Trail.**

## Regional Parks and Trails Plan (2005-2015)

The *2005 Regional Parks and Trails Plan* built on and refined the 1995 vision to set out the following 4-part purpose that balances the need to protect natural areas in the region with the desire to encourage recreation:

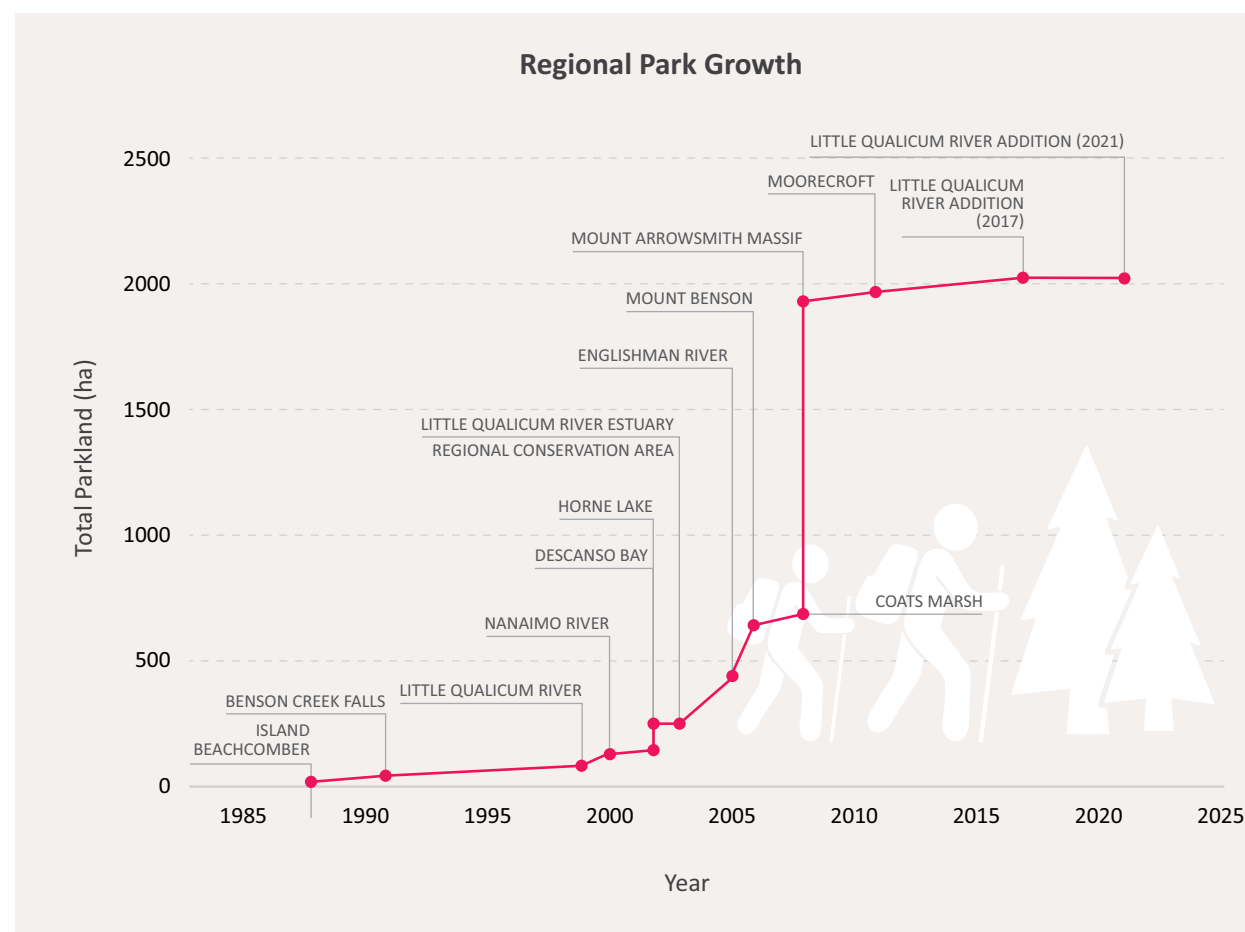
- secure, protect and steward land and water features of environmental significance and wildlife habitat value;
- provide rewarding outdoor recreation opportunities;
- foster education on and appreciation of the Region's natural environment; and
- enhance livability for current and future residents of the RDN.

In response to increasing demand across the region for large natural parks and trails, the municipalities joined the Regional Parks and Trails Service in 2006 and began contributing funds to land acquisition and development efforts in addition to parks planning, operations and maintenance.

The expansion of the regional service to include all jurisdictions enabled the network of regional parks and trails to grow significantly. By 2015, the Regional Parks and Trails System consisted of 12 Regional Parks and 10 Regional Trails, totalling 1,965 ha and 72km respectively.

## Regional Parks and Trails 2015– 2021

Today, the Regional Park System includes 12 regional parks and 10 Regional Trails, covering more than 2,025 ha and 72 km respectively.



**Figure 6.** Regional Park Growth



Coats Marsh Regional Park

## Regional Parks and Trails Portfolio – 2021

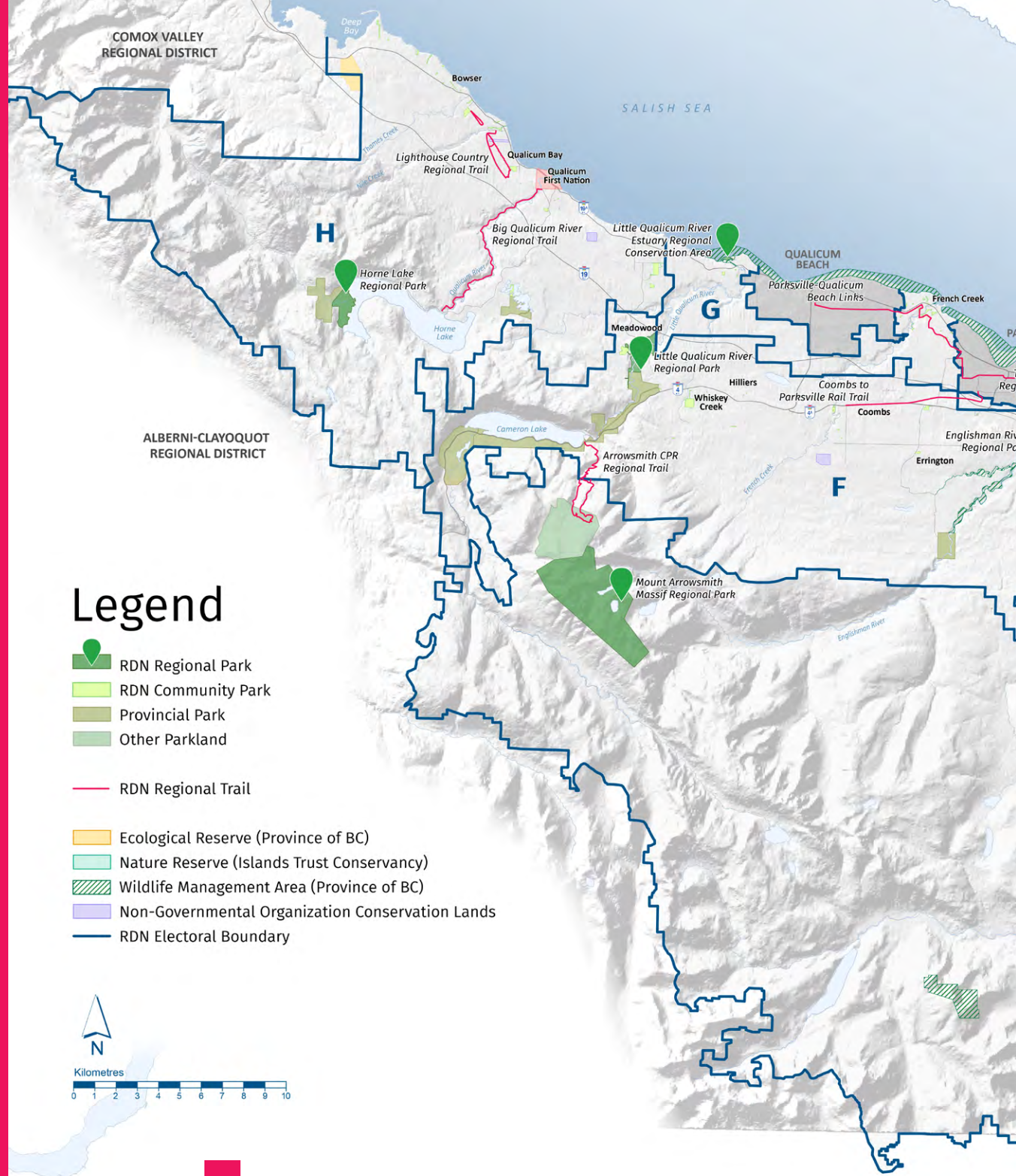
**Table 4.** Acquisition of RDN Regional Parks

Regional Parks	Year Established	Total Park Area (ha)
Beachcomber Regional Park	1988	1.3
Benson Creek Falls Regional Park	1991	33.3
Little Qualicum River Regional Park	1999, 2017, 2021	112.9
Nanaimo River Regional Park	2000	41.3
Descanso Bay Regional Park	2002	13.7
Horne Lake Regional Park	2002	105.8
Little Qualicum River Estuary Regional Conservation Area	2003	4.6
Englishman River Regional Park	2005	175.9
Mount Benson Regional Park	2006	212.9
Coats Marsh Regional Park	2008	45.4
Mount Arrowsmith Massif Regional Park	2008	1242.4
Moorecroft Regional Park	2011	36.2
<b>TOTALS</b>		<b>2025.6</b>

**Table 5.** Acquisition of RDN Regional Trails

Regional Trails	kms
Morden Colliery Regional Trail (eastern section)	2.5
Morden Colliery Regional Trail (western section)	0.8
Ammonite Falls Regional Trail	2.4
Arrowsmith CPR Regional Trail	11.5
Benson View Regional Trail	3.9
The Trans Canada Trail	23.0
Coombs to Parksville Rail Trail	5.3
Parksville Qualicum Beach Links - part in Area G	5.0
Top Bridge Regional Trail - part in Area G	0.2
Big Qualicum River Regional Trail	9.8
Lighthouse Country Regional Trail	7.5
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>71.9</b>

# REGIONAL PARKS AND TRAILS PORTFOLIO - 2021



**Map 2. Regional Parks and Trails Portfolio - 2021**





# COMMUNITY PARKS AND TRAILS 1959 - 2021

## 1959-2004

When the community parks function began in the early 1960s, the focus was largely on obtaining and preserving parkland and open space. In these early days, parkland was typically held in a natural, undeveloped state with few or no amenities. Given the rural nature of the electoral areas, demand and capacity for more urban-style parks was limited. During this time, staff and funding resources were very restricted and did not support substantial park development.

The first community park was established in 1959. After the first decade, there were approximately 8 hectares of community parkland. By 2004, the community parks and trails portfolio had grown to over 225 ha of land and 1.3 km of community trail in electoral areas A through H.

## 2005-2021

Due to population increases and densification of communities, as well as increased awareness about the value of access to parks, public demand for improved parkland has been growing steadily. Over time, the community parks and trails function has evolved from being a mechanism for preserving natural parks and greenspace to one that supports strategic planning through the design and development of neighbourhood, family-friendly parks with amenities.

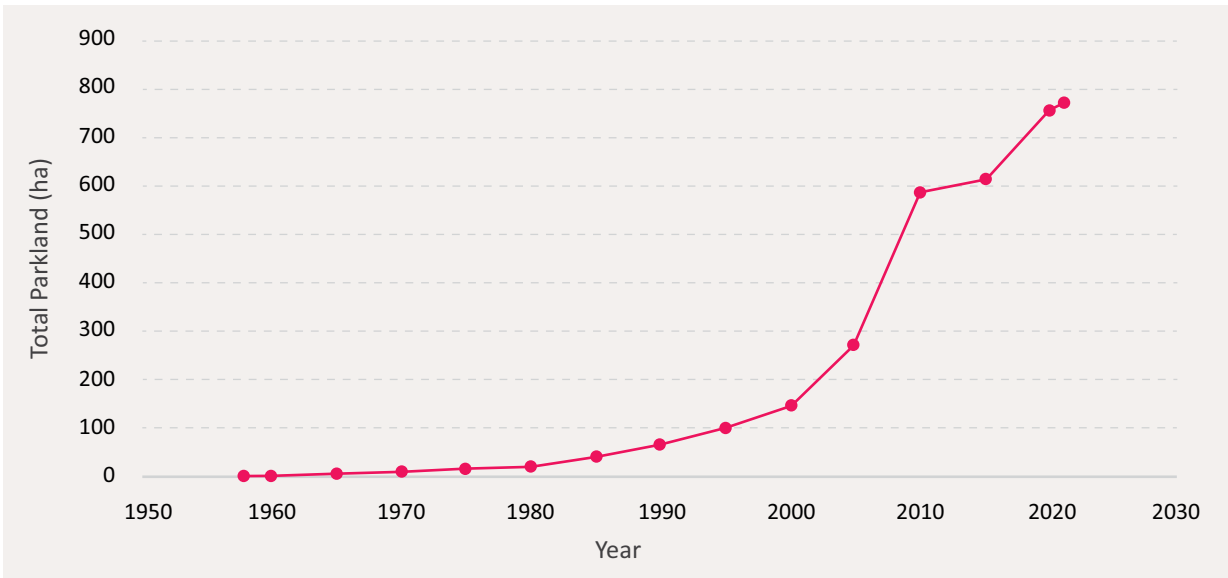


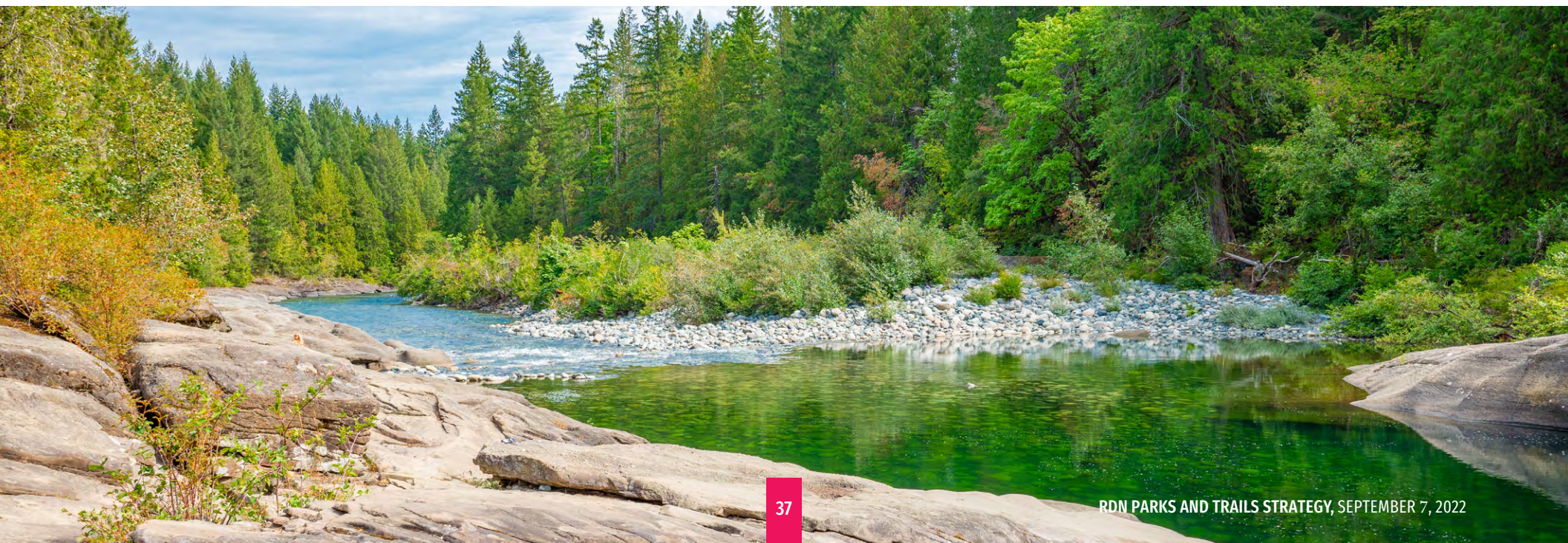
Figure 7. Community Park Growth

## Community Parks and Trails Portfolio – 2021

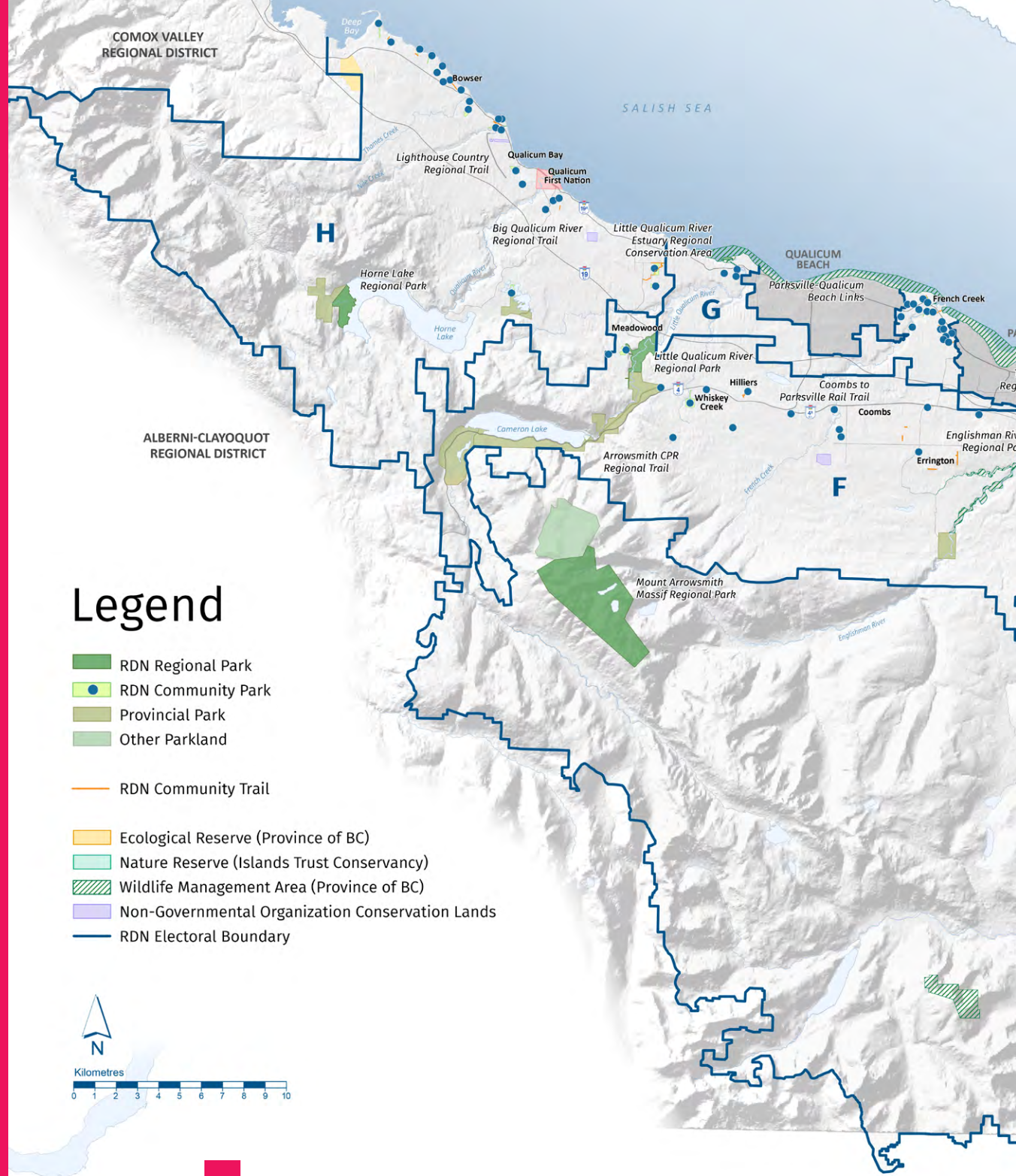
Today there is over 750 hectares of community parkland distributed across 175 community parks and an additional 38 community trails totalling 11.5 kms that provide neighbourhood walking loops to beaches, parks, schools and stores.

**Table 6.** Community Parks and Trails in 2021 by Electoral Area

Electoral Area	Community Park Count	Community Park Area (ha)	Community Trail Count	Community Trail Length (km)
<b>A</b>	15	32	0	0
<b>B</b>	35	512	8	2.2
<b>C</b>	14	40	1	3.1
<b>E</b>	30	30	10	1.2
<b>F</b>	15	40	5	1.5
<b>G</b>	34	54	7	0.6
<b>H</b>	32	54	7	2.9
<b>Total</b>	<b>175</b>	<b>762</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>11.5</b>



# COMMUNITY PARKS AND TRAILS PORTFOLIO - 2021



**Map 3.** Community Parks and Trails Portfolio - 2021





# RDN PARKS - TODAY

Regional Parks and Trails represent the area's unique natural environments. From alpine peaks to meandering rivers, from rare wetlands and misty waterfalls to clam beds and rocky foreshores, we have places to learn and to enjoy and experience nature.

Regional parks protect habitat for pacific salmon species, Western Red-backed salamanders, Little Brown Myotis bats, Great Blue Herons, and Black-tailed deer and help to enhance our quality of life, now and into the future.

Protected land also connects us to the history and culture of our landscapes. Indigenous Peoples have lived on and shaped the places we value today. The RDN has a role to play in honouring that history across the many areas it manages on behalf of the public.

# REGIONAL PARKS AND TRAILS

## THE ROLE OF REGIONAL PARKS AND TRAILS

The regional parks and trails system includes diverse natural and cultural landscapes and protects areas of ecological significance. It provides a variety of outdoor recreational opportunities and learning experiences for all residents to access, connect with, and enjoy. Building on the goals from the 2005–2015 Regional Parks and Trails Plan, the following objectives provide an evaluation tool that can help identify gaps in the system:

- provide a diversity of natural and cultural landscapes;
- protect and steward areas of ecological significance;
- provide a diversity of outdoor recreational opportunities and learning experiences; and
- provide opportunities for all residents to access, connect with, and enjoy nature.



## PROVIDE A DIVERSITY OF NATURAL AND CULTURAL LANDSCAPES

Six general landscape types occur in the Regional District, with many represented within Regional Parks. As illustrated in Table 7, forests, river systems and wetlands/estuaries are well represented. In comparison, lakes and alpine/mountain landscapes are less well represented.

**Table 7.** Representation of Landscapes in Regional Parks










Regional Park	Ocean-front	Lake-front	Rivers/Streams	Mountain/Alpine	Forest	Wetlands/Estuary
Nanaimo River Regional Park			•		•	
Coats Marsh Regional Park						•
Descanso Bay Regional Park	•				•	
Benson Creek Falls Regional Park			•		•	
Mount Arrowsmith Massif Regional Park				•		
Mount Benson Regional Park				•	•	
Beachcomber Regional Park	•				•	
Moorecroft Regional Park	•				•	•
Little Qualicum River Regional Park			•		•	•
Englishman River Regional Park			•		•	•
Little Qualicum River Estuary Regional Conservation Area	•					•
Horne Lake Regional Park		•	•		•	
<b>Total</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>5</b>

## PROTECT AND STEWARD AREAS OF ECOLOGICAL SIGNIFICANCE

The *Sensitive Ecosystem Inventory of Southeast Vancouver Island* defines seven types of unique natural habitats that are becoming endangered due to growing development. It also includes two additional ecosystem types that are less threatened but significant in their wildlife habitat value. This information is used to evaluate potential parkland acquisitions and in management planning to help determine the park's ability to support outdoor recreation and facility development. Comprehensive mapping of important regional natural areas is needed to help identify and prioritize lands for parkland acquisition that contribute to enhanced regional biodiversity.



**Table 8.** Representation of Sensitive Ecosystems in Regional Parks

									
Regional Park	Coastal Bluff	Terrestrial Herbaceous	Older Forest	Woodland	Cliff, Dune, Spit	Wetland	Riparian	Flooded Fields	Older 2nd Growth Forest
Nanaimo River Regional Park			•				•		•
Coats Marsh Regional Park						•			•
Descanso Bay Regional Park	•			•	•				•
Benson Creek Falls Regional Park							•		•
Mount Arrowsmith Massif Regional Park		•	•						
Mount Benson Regional Park		•	•	•	•	•			•
Beachcomber Regional Park	•			•					
Moorecroft Regional Park	•			•		•			•
Little Qualicum River Regional Park						•	•		•
Englishman River Regional Park			•		•	•	•		•
Little Qualicum River Estuary Regional Conservation Area					•	•	•		
Horne Lake Regional Park						•	•		•
<b>Total</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>9</b>

## PROVIDE A DIVERSITY OF OUTDOOR RECREATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES AND LEARNING EXPERIENCES

Another essential function of regional parks and trails is to provide outdoor recreational opportunities that have minimal impact on the natural environment. The type of recreation depends on each park property's specific environmental characteristics. Individual park management plans identify acceptable recreation activities and locations through park classification and internal park zoning.

Primary recreational activities within regional parks and trails include walking, running, hiking, biking, horseback riding, picnicking, wildlife watching, swimming and other water activities. Regional Recreation Areas offer additional activities, such as camping and boating.

### Accessibility and Universal Design

In general, accessibility in regional parks and trails is challenging due to the steep and often rugged natural terrain. Very few regional parks and trails are considered truly accessible, however, there are many accessible amenities located within them, such as short sections of trails, wheelchair-accessible toilets and picnic tables. Within the current RDN regional parks system, the Lighthouse Country Regional Trail is the only trail considered fully accessible and was it designed and constructed with accessibility in mind.

While accessibility enables a person with a disability to use an area and its facilities without assistance, universal design means considering the needs of as many people as possible and incorporating those needs into facilities and services.

Improving access to nature for those with mobility issues also improves access for families with young children and those who cannot navigate more challenging terrain. Universal design supports safer and more welcoming parks and trails for all visitors.

There are many opportunities to improve universal design and accessibility within the regional parks and trail system.

### Amenities

Regional parks and trails generally take a naturalistic approach to development. They have very few amenities, and there is an expectation that park visitors take a "leave-no-trace" mindset when visiting. Aside from parking areas, vault or portable toilets, garbage receptacles, benches, picnic tables, maps and information kiosks, most park and trail amenities are limited to nature trails with bridges, stairs, and directional signs or trail markers where necessary.

The regional park system has two regional recreation areas that offer public campground facilities and day-use areas - Horne Lake and Descanso Bay Regional Parks. While these properties include sensitive lands and areas managed and treasured for their cultural, habitat and ecosystem values, they also support high levels of activity and use.

### Recreation Programming

In addition to self-guided recreation, RDN Recreation and Parks also administers programs and guided recreation opportunities in some parks, such as hikes and summer camps. The type of park amenities provided can control the level of use but can also affect the ability to provide recreation programs. For example, offering a two-hour nature interpretation walk, or a full-day children's summer camp in parks without toilets can be challenging.

For the RDN's parks to best serve the community with guided recreational experiences, adequate amenities are essential.

## PROVIDE OPPORTUNITIES FOR ALL RESIDENTS TO ACCESS, CONNECT WITH, AND ENJOY NATURE

The distribution of parks among electoral areas and municipalities is an indicator of equitable geographic distribution. Table 9 shows that each electoral area contains at least one regional park, and five of the seven electoral areas have at least one

regional trail. Nanaimo, Parksville and Qualicum Beach each contain at least one regional trail.

**Table 9.** RDN Regional Parks and Trails by Jurisdiction (the District of Lantzville has no regional parks or trails).

Electoral Area/Municipality	Regional Parks	Regional Trails
<b>Area A</b>	Nanaimo River	• Morden Colliery
<b>Area B</b>	Coats Marsh Descanso Bay	
<b>Area C</b>	Benson Creek Falls Mount Arrowsmith Massif Mount Benson	• Ammonite Falls • Arrowsmith CPR • Benson View • Trans Canada Trail
<b>Area E</b>	Beachcomber Moorecroft	
<b>Area F</b>	Little Qualicum River	• Coombs to Parksville Rail Trail
<b>Area G</b>	Englishman River Little Qualicum River Estuary Regional Conservation Area	• Parksville Qualicum Beach Links
<b>Area H</b>	Horne Lake	• Big Qualicum River • Lighthouse Country
<b>City of Nanaimo</b>		• Trans Canada Trail
<b>City of Parksville</b>		• Top Bridge Regional Trail • Coombs to Parksville Rail Trail
<b>Town of Qualicum Beach</b>		• Parksville Qualicum Beach Links
<b>District of Lantzville</b>		

Another way of looking at the distribution of parks throughout the region is to consider how long a drive it is for residents to get to a regional park or trail. Table 10 illustrates the average drive time from each of the region's municipalities and electoral areas to the regional parks and trails.

**Table 10.** Proximity to Regional Parks and Trails

Jurisdiction	Place	Number of Regional Parks and Trails within		
		60 min.	45 min.	30 min.
Nanaimo	Nanaimo City Hall	15	10	4
Lantzville	Lantzville District Hall	15	14	9
Parksville	Parksville City Hall	14	14	10
Qualicum Beach	Qualicum Beach City Hall	14	13	10
Area A	Cedar Plaza	14	9	4
Area B*	Gabriola Island Ferry Terminal	6	2	2
Area C	Extension	15	8	4
Area C	East Wellington	16	12	8
Area E	Nanoose Place	14	14	12
Area F	Coombs Country Market	14	14	11
Area G	Sunrise Dr. at Island Highway (19A)	14	13	9
Area H	Lighthouse Community Centre	14	11	8

\* Includes ferry travel time



# REGIONAL PARKS AND TRAILS PLANNING

The RDN manages a variety of properties ranging from popular destinations to sensitive habitats where people rarely set foot. One of the key challenges of managing the regional park system is balancing the protection of natural habitats and human use of natural areas.

Several methods are used for planning, developing and managing regional parks and trails. Individual park management plans provide an overall direction for the development and management of a park over a ten-year period. Park classification systems help define the role various parks play within the park system. Park zoning further clarifies how individual parks function by establishing different zones within a park to help balance recreation and the protection of important natural ecosystems.

## Park Management Plans

A regional park's management plan is the primary guiding mechanism for the park. The plan sets a long-term vision for each regional park and provides strategic direction to guide decision-making. A management plan provides a road map to direct the RDN's work to protect the park's natural and cultural resources while facilitating recreational use where appropriate.

A management plan identifies the park's classification, designates management zones and recommends a list of capital projects. An implementation plan is prepared, including short- and long-term amenity replacement plans. Regional park 5-year budgets and annual work plans incorporate items identified in the implementation plan.

Management plans are living documents that are monitored and updated every ten years. While plan updates build on existing policy and plan direction, they also address emerging issues, new knowledge and the results of engagement processes.

As highlighted in Table 11, all 12 regional parks have management plans; the most recent is the Beachcomber Regional Park management plan, completed in 2018. Several of the management plan updates have not yet occurred following completion of the management plan term and are marked as overdue.



*Coombs to Parkville Rail Trail*

## PREPARING A MANAGEMENT PLAN

Preparing a management plan starts with reviewing the existing plan (if applicable) and evaluating the current conditions. This baseline assessment provides a clear understanding of the park's natural, cultural, and recreational values and identifies development and resource activities occurring on surrounding lands. An analysis of the overall goals of the protected area, use patterns, management objectives, and possible sources of conflict between park users and protected area policies is completed. The assessment and analysis, public feedback, Indigenous perspectives, and the RDN's overall strategic priorities determine the scope of the management plan.

The RDN welcomes public input into the development and review of park management plans. Each planning process offers several ways for the general public and public interest groups to get involved, including workshops, open houses, surveys, and public forums. The RDN also involves park ownership and management partners, First Nations governments, and other levels of government, including municipal, provincial and federal government agencies, in developing and reviewing park management plans.

**Table 11.** Management Plan Inventory

Regional Park	Management Plan		
	Date Completed	Renewal Date	Term of Plan
<b>Beachcomber</b>	2018	2028	10-Year Plan
<b>Benson Creek Falls</b>	2014	2024	10-Year Plan
<b>Coats Marsh</b>	2011	2021 (overdue)	10-Year Plan
<b>Descanso Bay</b>	2003	2008 (overdue)	5-Year Plan
<b>Englishman River</b>	2008	2013 (overdue)	5-Year Plan
<b>Horne Lake</b>	2005	2025	20-Year Plan
<b>Little Qualicum River Estuary</b>	2010	2020 (overdue)	10-Year Plan
<b>Little Qualicum River</b>	2012	2022	10-Year Plan
<b>Moorecroft</b>	2012	2022	10-Year Plan
<b>Mount Arrowsmith Massif</b>	2011	2021 (overdue)	10-Year Plan
<b>Mount Benson</b>	2009	2020 (overdue)	10-Year Plan
<b>Nanaimo River</b>	2005	2010 (overdue)	5-Year Plan

Although regional trails do not have management plans, similar principles are considered when planning the type of trail and the amenities to be included along the trail corridor and at trailheads. For the most part, regional trails extend long distances with few amenities along the way. The scale of amenities can vary substantially, from occasional benches or box steps at key locations to large suspension or truss bridges over rivers.

## Regional Parks and Trails Classification

### PARKS CLASSIFICATION

A regional parks classification system helps distinguish the various roles individual parks play in achieving the overall purpose of regional parks – to protect the rich diversity of natural and cultural landscapes and provide outdoor recreational experiences. It provides a quick snapshot of the types of parks, natural environments and recreational opportunities and can help identify gaps in the existing regional parks system.

The natural environment of each park is unique in its geography and environmental sensitivity. As a result, each park also has a different ability to support outdoor

recreation and facility development. The classification system helps ensure regional consistency when planning for natural resource protection, park development, amenities and programming. It provides the public with a clear picture of how the park is used and managed and what level of public access to expect.

As established in the 2005-2015 Regional Parks and Trails Plan, the RDN's regional parks and trails system uses the following classification system:

**Table 12.** Regional Park Classification System

Management Class	Primary Focus	Applies to...
<b>Regional Conservation Area</b>	Protect the natural environment. Limited, low impact outdoor activities permitted but may be restricted to specific areas. Environmental Interpretive facilities permitted provided they have minimal impact.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Little Qualicum Estuary Conservation Area</li> <li>• Coats Marsh RP</li> </ul>
<b>Regional Recreation Area</b>	Provide opportunities for a wide range of outdoor experiences, adventure activities, camping and events; managed to accommodate a relatively high number of visitors.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Descanso Bay RP</li> <li>• Horne Lake RP</li> </ul>
<b>Regional Natural Area</b>	Protect the natural environment and provide opportunities for a range of appropriate outdoor experiences and activities. These areas protect key natural areas that are significant to the environmental character of the region. They are not as ecologically sensitive as RCAs, but may contain some sensitive ecosystems.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Moorecroft RP</li> <li>• Beachcomber RP</li> <li>• Mt. Benson RP</li> <li>• Benson Creek Falls RP</li> <li>• Nanaimo River RP</li> <li>• Englishman River RP</li> <li>• Little Qualicum River RP</li> <li>• Mt. Arrowsmith Massif RP</li> </ul>
<b>Regional Trail</b>	Connect regional parks to other parks and trails, key points of interest (natural and cultural) and communities. May be in or near urban areas, to encourage non-vehicular modes of transportation, yet are different from local community trails in that they are larger in scope, crossing neighbourhoods and regional districts, linking communities and municipalities.	All regional trails

**The current regional parks and trails system has 2 conservation areas, 2 recreation areas, 8 regional natural areas, and 10 regional trails.**

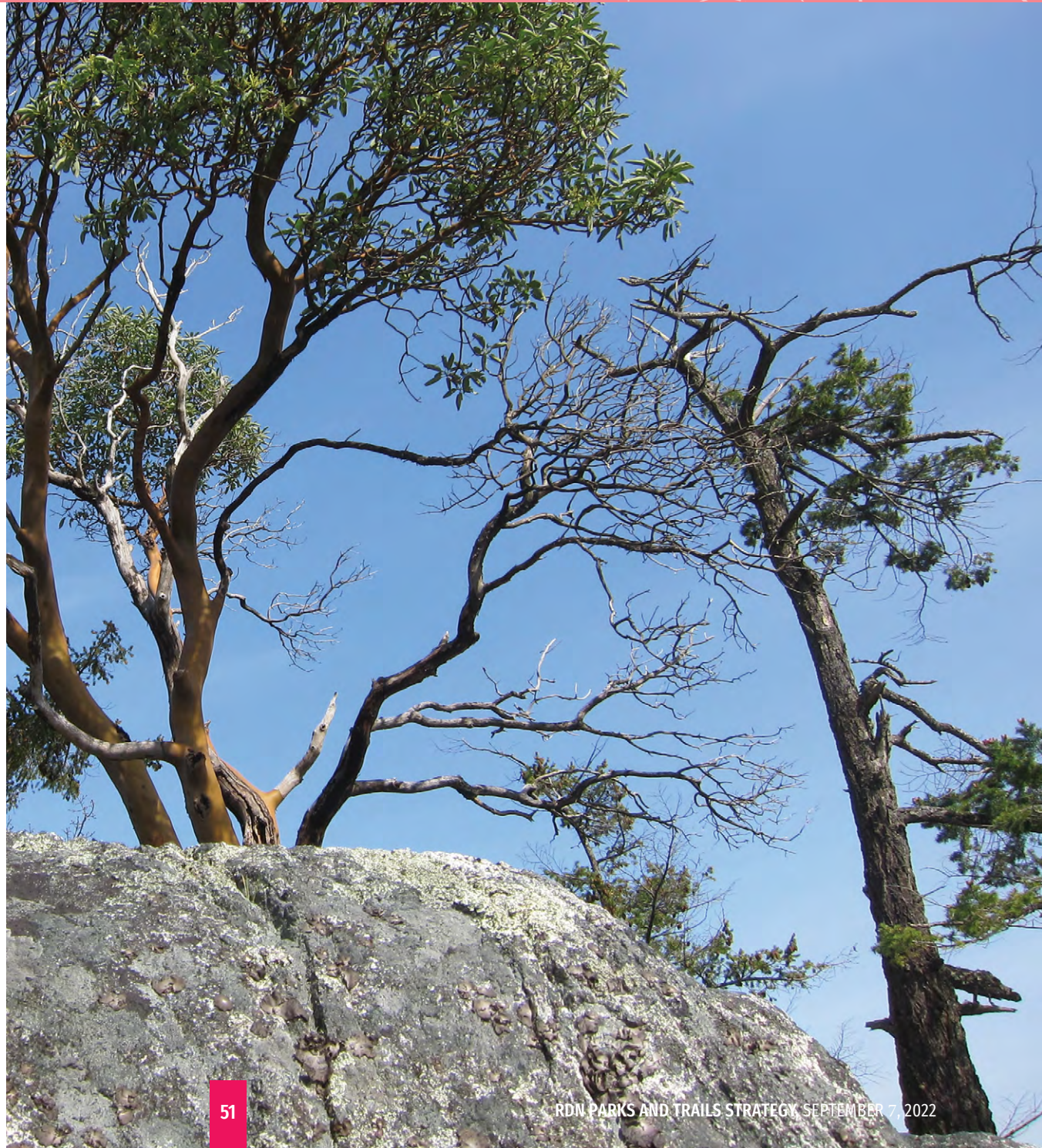
Further refinement of the classification system may help distinguish between conservation properties that permit minimal public access and those that do not allow any public access. As part of Action 3.2, the RDN may consider incorporating the park classification into the park name.

### TRAIL CLASSIFICATION



The Regional and Community Park and Trail System provides a variety of front-country, mid-country, and backcountry trail experiences. The RDN Parks and Trails Guidelines (2014) provide a trail classification system based on:

- the type of trail users,
- the amount of trail use,
- available funding, and
- environmental factors such as slope.

Trail width and surfacing are important design factors that affect how the trail will be used and serve the community. Classifying trail types helps to plan and develop trails to a consistent standard and better understand operational requirements.



**Table 13.** Trail Type Classification, modified from RDN Parks and Trails Guidelines (2014)

Classification	Description	Regional Trail Examples	Community Trail Examples
Front-Country Trails			
Shared Roadways: Asphalt road shoulder	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Urban or rural areas</li><li>• Located along existing roads within the Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure (MOTI) road allowance.</li><li>• Target uses: active transportation and recreation</li><li>• Target user groups: local residents, commuters, tourists</li><li>• Level of amenities: low</li><li>• Surface: asphalt, widened shoulder of road travel lane</li><li>• Width: Highways with wide (greater than 1 meter) paved and maintained shoulders.</li><li>• Accessibility: Universally accessible where possible.</li><li>• Maintenance level: low (MoTI responsible)</li><li>• Construction and maintenance costs: low</li><li>• Description: lightly used residential or rural roads that provide pleasant cycling and walking opportunities.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Parksville-Qualicum Links</li></ul>	
Type 1: Hard/Compacted surface trail High level of development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Urban or rural areas</li><li>• Target uses: active transportation, tourism, recreation</li><li>• Target user groups: local residents, commuters, tourists</li><li>• Level of amenities: high</li><li>• Surface: paved/compacted gravel</li><li>• Width: 2-4 meters (2-way travel)</li><li>• Accessibility: Universally accessible where possible.</li><li>• Maintenance level: high</li><li>• Construction and maintenance costs: high</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Coombs-Parksville Rail Trail.</li><li>• Lighthouse Country Regional Trail</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Village Way Path (Area B)</li></ul> 

Classification	Description	Regional Trail Examples	Community Trail Examples
<b>Mid-Country Trails</b>			
<b>Type 2:</b> <b>Soft surface trail</b> <b>Medium level of development</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Urban or rural areas</li> <li>• Target uses: recreation</li> <li>• Target user groups: local residents</li> <li>• Level of amenities: low</li> <li>• Surface: crushed gravel or natural surface</li> <li>• Width: 1-1.5 m</li> <li>• Accessibility: Not typically accessible to mobility impaired due to grade, surfacing and trail width.</li> <li>• Maintenance level: moderate</li> <li>• Construction and maintenance costs: moderate</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ammonite Falls Regional Trail</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cranswick Matterson Community Trail (Area F)</li> <li>• Benson Meadows Path (Area C-EW/PV)</li> <li>• Brickyard Community Park trails (Area E)</li> </ul> 
<b>Back-Country Trails</b>			
<b>Type 3:</b> <b>Natural surface trail</b> <b>Minimum level of development</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rural or backcountry areas</li> <li>• Target uses: recreation</li> <li>• Target user groups: local residents, tourists</li> <li>• Level of amenities: low to none</li> <li>• Surface: natural, gravel where needed</li> <li>• Width: 0.5 – 1 m</li> <li>• Accessibility: Not typically accessible to mobility impaired due to grade, surfacing and trail width.</li> <li>• Maintenance level: low</li> <li>• Construction and maintenance costs: low</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Arrowsmith CPR Regional Trail</li> <li>• Benson View Regional Trail</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sea Ridge Davingham Community Trail (Area E)</li> <li>• French Creek Community Park trail (Area G)</li> <li>• Creekside Islewood Community Trail (Area H)</li> </ul> 

## Regional Park Zones

Delineating specific park management zones within each park helps balance the provision of outdoor recreation and the protection of important natural ecosystems.

Park management plans typically identify management zones that divide the park into logical management units. The zones clarify what and where different levels of activity and development can occur, reflecting the intended land use, the degree of human use, level of management and development permitted. Park zoning is a valuable tool to implement conservation covenant requirements and ensure careful park management.

There are three standard management zoning options: conservation, natural environment, and infrastructure/intensive recreation.

**Conservation Zone:** This zone protects the park's biodiversity, visual qualities, ecosystems and ecosystem processes. It includes sensitive ecosystems and areas with high conservation value (for example, areas known to contain endangered species). Conservation of ecological assets takes precedence over human activities. These areas are not to be developed for public use.

**Natural Environment Zone:** The focus of this zone is to protect natural values while providing passive, non-vehicular recreational opportunities in a largely natural environment. The activities permitted in this zone are low impact and involve limited development. Trail development is often permitted within this zone.

**Intensive Recreation Use / Development Zone:** The focus of this zone is to provide the infrastructure that supports outdoor recreation and learning opportunities, that promotes healthy lifestyles and a connection with nature and culture. Ongoing management within this zone prevents the further deterioration of ecological values and acts to restore natural vegetation where practical.

These areas include high-use recreational trails and visitor facilities that require some landscape modification. Development may include parking areas, information kiosks, and park buildings such as washrooms, picnic shelters and storage buildings.

### What are Conservation Covenants?

Restrictive land use covenants are a common feature of park management. Covenants are a legal mechanism that clarifies that a property's natural values require protection and that human use of lands can harm those values. Conservation covenants are overseen and monitored by a third party (the covenant holder).

Examples:

the Little Qualicum River Regional Park, Horne Lake Regional Park and Englishman River Regional Park have covenants on title that restrict land use to protect water values.

The Little Qualicum River Estuary Regional Conservation Area, the RDN and co-owner Ducks Unlimited Canada placed a broad covenant on title to protect the natural values of the property.

At Moorecroft and Mount Benson Regional Parks, the 'conservation zones' are formally delineated and implemented through conservation covenants that clearly define the amenities and improvements allowed in the park.

# REGIONAL PARKS AND TRAILS ACQUISITION

## The Acquisition Process

A property may be considered for acquisition as a regional park by being brought forward from an existing priority acquisition list, from an unforeseen opportunity that arises due to the property coming on the market, or if a Board or staff member presents it to the Board for consideration.

Once a property is flagged for consideration, it is assessed using the Regional Parkland Acquisition Criteria and Rating Framework (see Appendix D), which was developed in 2009 as a tool to rate the value of the land under consideration. As identified in Action 3.1, further refinement of these acquisition criteria is needed to ensure they reflect current-day acquisition priorities.

## Mechanisms for Acquiring Land

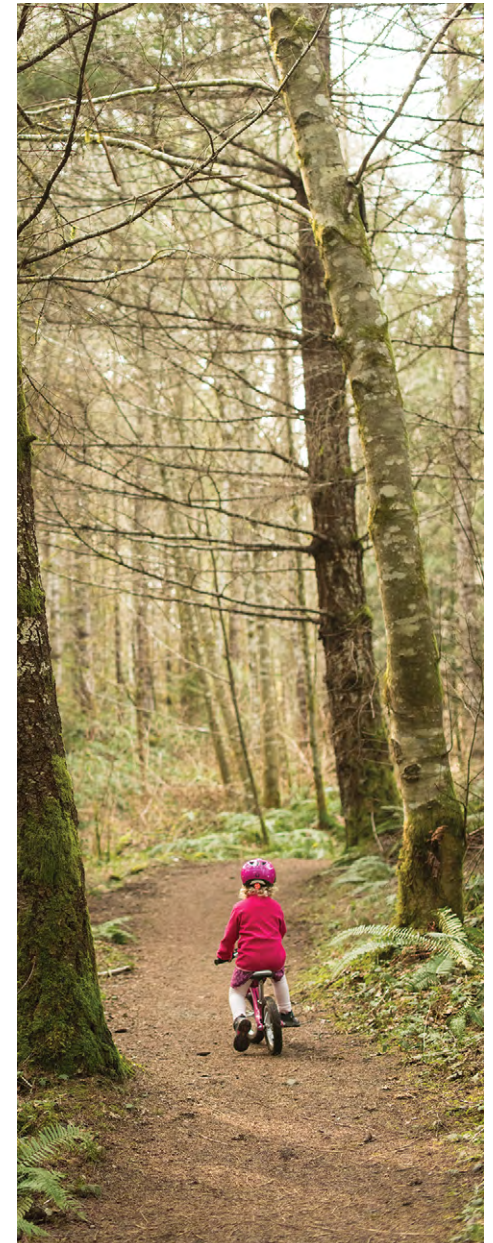
Lands for regional parks and trails are acquired in two basic ways: through the transfer of lands to the RDN by others and direct purchase by the RDN.

### TRANSFER OF LANDS

Several regional parks have been established with the help of contributions from the Nanaimo and Area Land Trust (NALT), the Land Conservancy of BC, the Nature Trust of BC, the Nature Conservancy of Canada, Ducks Unlimited and others. These contributions typically take the form of long-term leases or licenses of occupation. For example, the Nanaimo River Regional Park lands were purchased by The Land Conservancy of BC and are managed by the RDN through a 99-year lease.

Land contributions and agreements from private corporations are an additional acquisition tool. TimberWest is one corporation that has contributed lands in past years to the regional parks system (e.g., Englishman River). Another example is the Trans Canada Trail which is managed as a regional trail through a renewable licence agreement with the forestry landowner.

Contributions in the form of gifts from individuals, while less common, occur periodically. Coats Marsh Regional Park, Beachcomber Regional Park and Little Qualicum River Regional Park were all established, in part, using lands gifted by individuals and corporations.



Sometimes opportunities arise through the development process that allows the acquisition of regional parkland through the transfer of lands at rezoning or subdivision. For example, the 20-year Fairwinds' Lakes District Neighbourhood development agreement will ultimately result in the dedication of a 100-ha parcel of land for a regional park. In 1999, the RDN acquired the initial 44 hectares of Little Qualicum River Regional Park through dedication at subdivision.

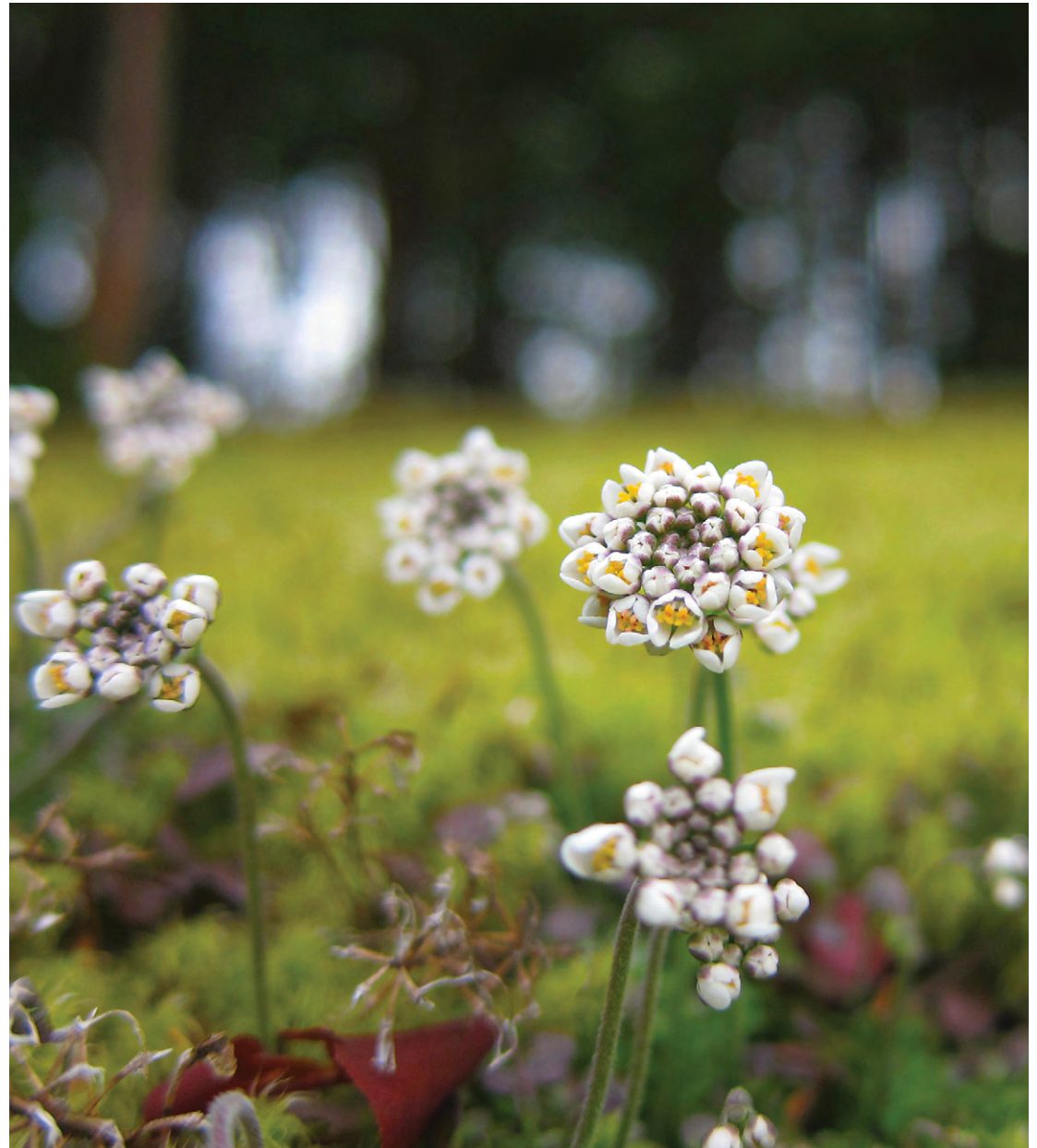
### **DIRECT PURCHASE**

Acquiring regional parkland through direct purchase is an important element of the RDN's acquisition efforts. Descanso Bay Regional Park is an example of a property that was purchased by the RDN using funds raised through taxation. Further detail on how acquisitions are funded is provided in the following section on Funding and Governance.

### **COMBINATION OF METHODS**

Regional parks and trails are often established using a combination of direct purchases and land transfers. Direct purchases by the RDN are often used to leverage transfers from other agencies that share the Regional District's vision for a particular site.

The Coats Marsh Regional Park property is owned by both the RDN and The Nature Trust and managed by the RDN as a Regional Park through a 99-year lease agreement. Half the value of Coats Marsh Regional Park was donated to The Nature Trust through the Environment Canada Ecological Gift Program and the RDN purchased the other 50% of the property interest.





Englishman River Regional Park

### Maintaining the status quo

With the current provision of regional parkland at 11.9 hectares per 1,000 people, the RDN will need to add approximately 277 hectares of parkland over the next 20 years to maintain that ratio as the population increases per

anticipated projections. As identified in Action 3.1, a regional strategy to guide acquisition will provide a clear foundation for decisions on future parkland acquisitions.

Table 14. Provision of Regional Parkland

Regional Parkland 2021 (ha)	2021 Census (RDN EAs and Munis)	Regional Parkland ha per 1,000 people	2041 Projected Population*	Regional Parkland ha per 1,000 people in 2041 (no acquisition)	How much additional parkland would be needed to maintain current per capita provision in 2041? (ha)
2,025	170,367	11.9	193,649	10.5	277 (need a total of 2,302 ha)

\*Source: *Regional Housing Needs Report*, Table 5: Projected Population and Housing Demand, RDN Baseline Scenario, 2016-2041.

# REGIONAL PARKS AND TRAILS FUNDING AND GOVERNANCE

## Funding

The Regional Parks and Trails service's funding model can be summarized by the following points:

- Lands for regional parks and trails are acquired through direct purchase by the Regional District and through transfer to the Regional District by others, including non-profit societies (e.g. land trusts), private corporations and individuals. The two methods of acquisition are often used in combination.
- Funding for regional parks and trails capital projects is provided primarily through tax requisition, transfers from reserves, grants, donations and contributions obtained through the development process.
- The RDN relies on property tax revenues to fund its parkland purchases, capital development projects and operating costs. Since regional parks and trails are established and developed to serve residents of the entire region, a property value tax is collected from all residents, including those in the municipalities.

## Governance

Decision making and governance of regional parks and trails also takes a regional approach, with elected officials from each Electoral Area and municipality sitting on the Regional Parks and Trails Select Committee (RPTSC). The RPTSC is an advisory committee to the Board and receives regional park specific reports and information for consideration prior to approval by the RDN Board.



*Beachcomber Regional Park*

# COMMUNITY PARKS AND TRAILS



## THE ROLE OF COMMUNITY PARKS AND TRAILS

The overarching purpose of community parks and trails is to:

- protect open spaces and the environment;
- provide social and recreational opportunities, and;
- provide local trail connections.

Similar to municipal parks, the RDN's community parks and trails serve local electoral area residents and do not typically serve as regional attractions. Factors such as population density, funding/taxation, community destinations and rural character of the electoral area affect the need for and development of parks and trails. As a result, parks and trails are unevenly distributed across the Electoral Areas as illustrated in Table 16 on page 69.

With the exception of the 707 Community Park on Gabriola Island (Electoral Area B), individual community parks are relatively small with an average size of approximately 1.7 ha. They are acquired, designed, and developed to benefit local communities within the electoral area. While there are 7 electoral areas within the RDN, there are 8 separate Community Parks and Trails Services, one in each of the Electoral Areas A, B, E, F, G, and H, and two in Electoral Area C (Extension and East Wellington/Pleasant Valley).

With advice and guidance from local park and trail advisory committees, the RDN undertakes a full range of functions under each Community Parks and Trails Service, including park planning, land acquisition, parks and trails development, and ongoing operation and maintenance of parks and trails.



## **Protect open spaces and the environment**

Not all community parks have been developed for public access and enjoyment and many remain in an undeveloped, natural, forested state. A basic level of development for a community park might include benches and walking trails, whereas a more developed park may include play equipment and a sports court. Undeveloped parks are natural, without any managed trails, amenities or infrastructure.

Given the rural context of many of the electoral areas, when early RDN community parks were established during the subdivision process their primary purpose was as a means to secure open space, with little need for improvements or park amenities. As the population grows and the expectations for local parks increase, there is greater demand for park amenities and improvements. When new parks are established for recreational purposes, there is a demand for development in the short term. In some instances, the developer will construct amenities such as a parking area and walking trails before the park is turned over to the public.

## **Provide social and recreational opportunities**

Within the current RDN Community Parks portfolio, approximately 86% of the community parks are developed. They may have trails, benches, signage, parking areas, toilets, garbage cans, picnic tables, playgrounds, sports courts, or playing fields. Across the RDN, Electoral Areas B and H have the highest number of developed community parks with the most diversity of recreational activities. The more rural electoral areas such as C and F have the fewest number of developed community parks.

Although there may be accessible amenities such as wheelchair-accessible playgrounds, toilets and picnic tables within community parks, none are fully accessible.

## **Provide local trail connections**

Community trails provide local connections for non-motorized access to destinations such as parks, schools, community facilities, beaches, commercial areas and other points of interest. Today there are few developed community trails in the electoral areas due to past development patterns, land availability and funding limitations. With population growth and an intensification of local traffic, local trail networks and active transportation routes are becoming increasingly important.

Further trail network planning will be accomplished by developing electoral area master plans and implementing active transportation projects as outlined in Actions 5.1 and 6.2 respectively.

# COMMUNITY PARKS AND TRAILS PLANNING

## Official Community Plans

Planning for community parks starts with the Official Community Plan (OCP) for each electoral area<sup>1</sup>. Each OCP describes the overarching plan for how the electoral area will be developed over time, priorities for environmental protection, and opportunities for parks, trails, outdoor recreation and culture. OCPs also identify the location and amount of parkland, current and proposed recreational land uses, and provide general guidelines for parkland acquisition priorities.

## Community Parks and Trails Strategic Plan (CPTS)

In 2013, a *Community Parks and Trails Strategic Plan* was developed for communities between Nanoose Bay and Bowser (Electoral Areas E, F, G, H). This plan provides a systematic approach to parks and trails planning and development at the community level.

## Park Development Plans

A park development plan is prepared when the community comes forward with a request for significant development or upgrades to a community park. Sometimes referred to as master plans, they are developed with public input from the electoral area residents, the electoral area community park advisory committee and other stakeholders. A development plan identifies the types of park amenities to be incorporated in the park, the estimated cost of the improvements, and an implementation and phasing plan. Funding park development is a challenge for the small electoral area park budgets; therefore these capital park projects often rely on senior-level grants for funding. Development plans, prepared with public consultation, are vital when applying for these grants.

Due to their smaller size, community parks do not typically have management plans. One exception is 707 Community Park in Area B, which functions similarly to a regional park due to its large size and expansive trail network.

<sup>1</sup> The Islands Trust is the land planning authority for Electoral Area B. The RDN is the land planning authority for the other 6 electoral areas.

## SOME EXAMPLES OF PARK MASTER PLANS:

- **Area A** – Cedar Skatepark, Thelma Griffiths CP
- **Area B** – Huxley CP
- **Area C** – EW/PV – Anders and Dorrit's CP, Meadow Drive CP
- **Area E** – Jack Bagley CP, Blueback CP
- **Area F** – Errington CP, Meadowood CP
- **Area G** – Boulton CP
- **Area H** – Lions CP, Dunsmuir CP



Huxley Community Park, Area B



## Provision of Parkland

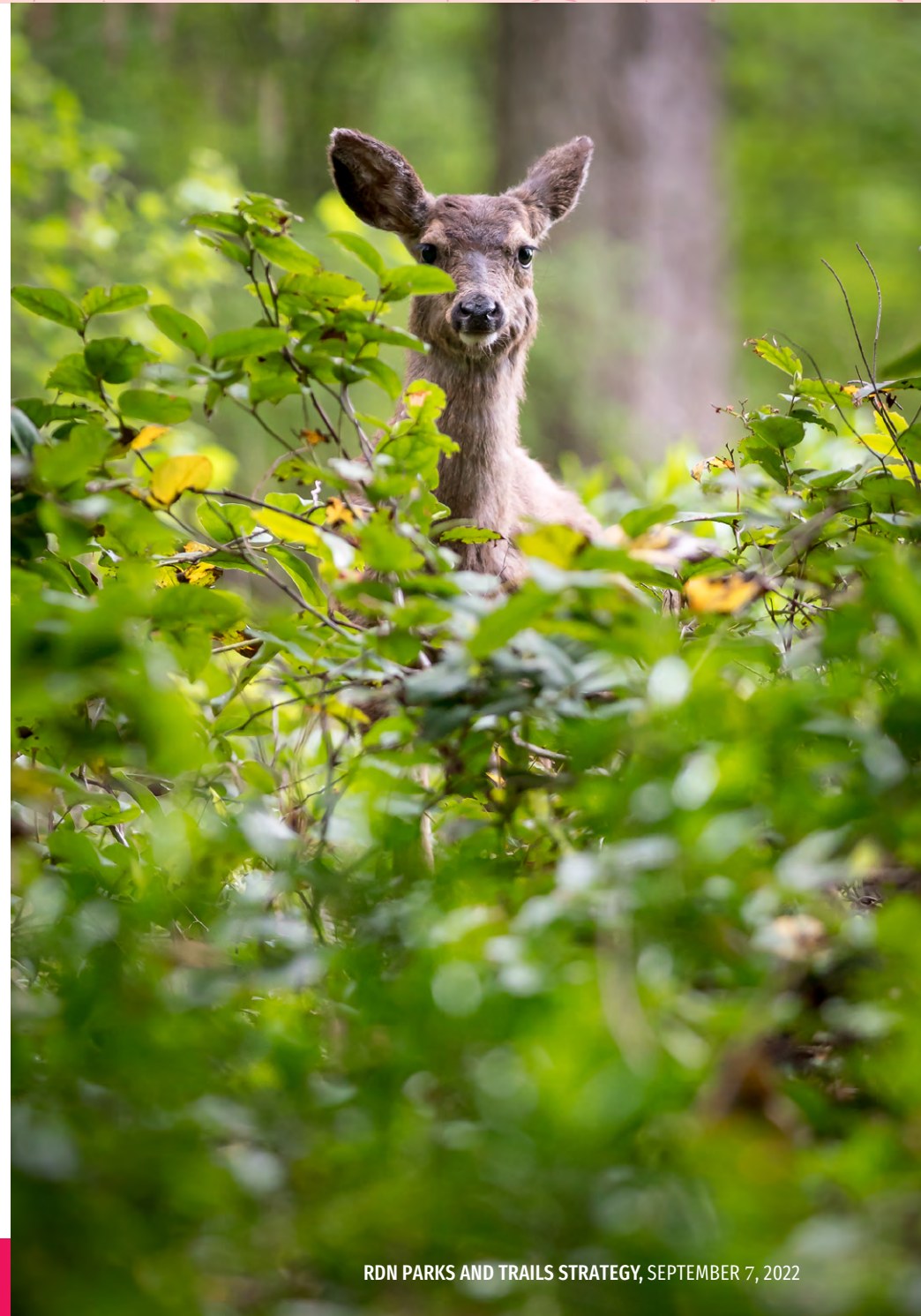
Different approaches can be used to determine how much community parkland should be provided in electoral areas.

- **Traditional Standards Approach:** This methodology applies a numerical standard to evaluating parkland provision. A reasonable standard for community parks is 2.5 to 5.0 hectares per 1,000 population. There are challenges in using this approach evenly between urban and rural communities as it cannot factor in the different demographic profiles of communities, or the class of parkland being provided. The existing community parkland provision for the electoral areas is shown in Table 16 on page 69.
- **Distance Standards Approach:** 500 meters is a common standard for measuring walking distance to community parks. This length has been identified as the distance most people are willing to walk to a park. This standard is most relevant in urban and suburban population densities where private open space is limited. In rural areas, private lots are typically larger, and there is easier access to open space, reducing the need for a park within walking distance. Due to the varied development of the electoral areas within the RDN (urban, suburban, and rural), it is recommended that a flexible approach be taken – using a 500 m radius for neighbourhood parks in suburban and urban areas, and up to one km or more in more rural areas.
- **Community-Based Approach:** A community-based approach combines quantitative data and qualitative information: demographics, population growth and densities, distance to other park types (regional parks, provincial parks, crown lands, etc.), active and passive parkland types and user input to identify priorities for community parks and trails decisions.

The development of Electoral Area Parks and Trails masterplans should use the community-based approach.

### STEPS TO DETERMINE NEED AND LOCATION OF ADDITIONAL PARKLAND USING A COMMUNITY-BASED APPROACH:

- 1 Review existing parkland classes to understand how much of each park type exists in the local area.
- 2 Review the existing community parkland hectarage per 1,000 population as a general indication of parkland provision.
- 3 Review mapping to study how the area is generally served by existing parkland and trails.
- 4 Consider the following key statistics to understand the general demographic profile and sense of need for the Electoral Area.
  - Percent change in population over the past 5 years;
  - Population density per sq. km.;
  - Median age of population;
  - Percent of population under 15 years old; and
  - Percent of population without children at home.
- 5 Consider other priorities identified through public consultation, as well as other input received through the Parks department.





## Community Parks and Trails Classification

Classifying community parks and trails provides a basis for understanding the composition and distribution of parks and trails within electoral areas. These park and trail classifications offer developers a set of clear park and trail design and development criteria to consider before submitting rezoning or subdivision applications that involve parkland dedication. The classification process will also help inform the development of electoral area parks and trails master plans as identified in Action 5.1.

### COMMUNITY PARK CLASSIFICATION

Each type of park is classified according to its function. This classification provides a set of criteria on the kind of land to purchase or receive through the development process.

By classifying community parks, the RDN is able to:

- Plan for present and future population needs;
- Prioritize classes of park development that may be under-represented in some areas;
- Evaluate ideas for acquisition and improvement against criteria to ensure land base is suited for intended purpose; and
- Better understand operational budget requirements.

Undeveloped parks, including natural parks and potential neighbourhood parks held in reserve for future development, receive minimal maintenance, meaning operational costs for these sites are low. When parkland is developed, even to a small degree, there is an increase in inspection and maintenance requirements.

Table 15 on the next pages outlines community park classification categories including: Neighbourhood Park, Natural Park, Linear Park and Water Access. Surplus Park is an additional classification to describe those lands acquired in the past that do not offer environmental or recreational value and where a cost/benefit analysis suggests that disposition may be desirable (RDN Community Parks and Trails Strategy, 2014).

In Electoral Area B, the Islands Trust has park-specific zoning that identifies parks as either “Passive Recreation Community Park (P2) “ or “Active Recreation Community Park (P3)”.

**Table 15.** Community Park Classification

**Neighbourhood Park:**

Function	
<b>Primary Function</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide active recreation amenities</li> </ul>
<b>Secondary Function(s)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Protection of natural areas</li> <li>• Provision of trails</li> <li>• Protection of cultural or heritage features</li> </ul>
Criteria	
<b>Usable Space</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Min. 0.5 acres of usable area</li> </ul>
<b>Max. Slope</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• &lt;20% slope for 90% of site</li> </ul>
<b>Shape</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Equilateral rectangle preferred</li> <li>• Good road frontage exposure (corner lot preferred)</li> <li>• No panhandle lots</li> <li>• Minimal number of residential backyards along the park edges</li> </ul>
<b>Encumbrances</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Absent or minimal encumbrances such as geotechnical, floodplain, environmental and underground utilities (encumbrances are permissible over and above the 5% dedication)</li> </ul>
<b>Location</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Closer/within population centres; not in lower density rural areas</li> </ul>
<b>Other</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Water service connection where possible</li> </ul>
Typical Development	
<b>Amenities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Playground</li> <li>• Trails</li> <li>• Sports field</li> <li>• Sports court</li> <li>• Washroom</li> <li>• Picnic facilities</li> <li>• Benches</li> <li>• Signage</li> <li>• Bike facilities</li> <li>• Parking</li> <li>• Art</li> <li>• Water service</li> </ul>

**Natural Park:**

Function	
<b>Primary Function</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Protection of significant environmental features or functions</li> </ul>
<b>Secondary Function(s)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Protection of cultural or heritage features</li> <li>• Provision of trails</li> <li>• Providing local 'green space' for aesthetics and nature appreciation</li> </ul>
Criteria	
<b>Usable Space</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sufficient to protect environmental feature</li> </ul>
<b>Max. Slope</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No max. slope</li> <li>• Not to include high risk, geotechnically-sensitive lands that require significant engineering works</li> </ul>
<b>Shape</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No constraints</li> </ul>
<b>Encumbrances</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Absent or minimal encumbrances that may impact environmental protection</li> </ul>
<b>Location</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No location constraints</li> </ul>
Typical Development	
<b>Amenities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Trail segments</li> <li>• Benches</li> <li>• Fencing</li> <li>• Interpretive signage</li> <li>• Habitat restoration</li> <li>• Wildlife boxes</li> </ul>



## Linear Park:

Function	
<b>Primary Function</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Trail connectivity to community destinations through active transportation</li> </ul>
<b>Secondary Function(s)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Access to natural areas</li> <li>Emergency access/egress</li> </ul>
Criteria	
<b>Usable Space</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Minimum 4m on cleared sites</li> <li>Minimum 10m where significant trees are present</li> </ul>
<b>Max. Slope</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2% preferred trail slope for accessible trails</li> <li>5% max. slope over long distances for accessible trails</li> <li>Where slopes exceed 5%, landings required for accessible trails</li> <li>Slopes may be steeper in backcountry trails</li> <li>Switchbacks or steps on steep lands</li> </ul>
<b>Shape</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Linear</li> </ul>
<b>Encumbrances</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ability to build hard surface pathway without encumbering access to underground utilities</li> <li>Not obstructed by utility boxes, hydro, mailbox, hydrants, etc.</li> </ul>
<b>Location</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Connecting key destinations</li> </ul>
Typical Development	
<b>Amenities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Trail</li> <li>Signage</li> <li>Fencing</li> <li>Bollards</li> <li>Benches</li> </ul>

## Water Access:

Function	
<b>Primary Function</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Access to ocean or river frontage</li> </ul>
<b>Secondary Function(s)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Natural area protection</li> <li>Viewing opportunities</li> <li>Trails</li> </ul>
Criteria	
<b>Usable Space</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No required size</li> <li>Unstable slopes to be avoided</li> </ul>
<b>Max. Slope</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No max. slope</li> <li>Low bank sites with easier access are preferred</li> <li>Slopes &gt;50% may require stairs and have higher costs</li> </ul>
<b>Shape</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Linear</li> </ul>
<b>Encumbrances</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Access achieved with minimal tree or vegetation removal</li> </ul>
<b>Location</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Use of public, undeveloped road rights of way is preferred</li> <li>No encroachment onto adjacent properties</li> <li>Adequate buffer to adjacent private properties</li> </ul>
Typical Development	
<b>Amenities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Parking</li> <li>Benches</li> <li>Washroom</li> <li>Signage</li> <li>Stairs</li> <li>Trail</li> </ul>

## COMMUNITY TRAIL CLASSIFICATION

The Regional and Community Trail system provides a variety of front-country, mid-country, and backcountry trail experiences. The RDN Parks and Trails Guidelines (2014) provide a trail classification system for all RDN trails. See Table 13: Trail Type Classification on page 52 for more information and examples of Community Trails.

# COMMUNITY PARKS AND TRAILS ACQUISITION

## Acquisition Criteria

One of the challenges encountered when planning a cohesive community park and trails system is evaluating whether new acquisitions fit within the needs of the overall system. When a property is being considered for a community park or trail, the RDN refers to several sources of information to aid in the decision-making process, including the public input received on parkland dedication proposals through the development application process.

Parkland acquisition efforts are guided by the park and trail-related policies in Official Community Plans. In addition to OCP policies, additional community parkland acquisition criteria have been developed to help evaluate potential parkland. These criteria help identify the appropriate classification for potential community park acquisition and provide consistency and objectivity of assessments. See Appendix E for the Community Parkland Acquisition Criteria.

## Mechanisms for Acquiring Land

Lands for community parks and trails can be acquired through the transfer of lands to the RDN by others and by the direct purchase of land.

### TRANSFER OF LANDS:

The RDN acquires most community parkland through the development process. Section 510 of the *BC Local Government Act* allows local governments to require up to 5% land dedication for park at the time of property subdivision. In some cases, the RDN may require cash-in-lieu, rather than land dedication, in an amount equivalent to 5% of the land's assessed value. Use of these funds is limited to future parkland purchases. The district can sometimes secure a parkland contribution over and above the required 5% through the rezoning process.



In some cases, Federal and Provincial Crown lands are secured as community park through lease or licence. Joyce Lockwood Community Park (Area B), Malcolm Rd and Errington Community Parks (Area F), Nanoose Rd Community Park (Area E) and Oakdowne and Wildwood Community Parks (Area H) are managed as community park through Licence of Occupation with the Province.

The RDN holds numerous agreements with the Provincial Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure (MoTI) for trail and water access development on undeveloped road allowance. These lands are developed under a permit or licence for community park and trail use.

Legal agreements with private landowners and land conservation organizations often provide key land access for public parks and trails. La Selva Place Community Trail (Area E) and Thompson Clarke Community Trail (Area H) are valuable local trail connections made possible through Licence to Use agreements with private landowners. The BC Parks Foundation recently led a successful fundraising campaign to purchase the French Creek Estuary lands. The RDN will manage these lands as a Community Park (Area G) through a long-term lease with the BC Parks Foundation. These types of agreements can also be used to provide community trails on private forestry lands.

Contributions in the form of gifts from individuals, while less common, occur periodically. Anders and Dorrit's Community Park (Area C) was established through an estate donation. Individuals or corporate landowners may also donate land through the federal Ecological Gifts Program and receive an official donation receipt.

#### **DIRECT PURCHASE:**

The direct purchase of land provides another opportunity for acquiring community parkland. Monies collected through electoral area community parks tax requisition funded the purchase of Cox Community Park, Dodd Narrows Community Park on Mudge Island, and an addition to 707 Community Park in Electoral Area B; Blueback and Claudet Road Community Parks in Electoral Area E; and an addition to Meadowood Community Park in Electoral Area F. Further detail on acquisition funding is provided in the following section on Funding and Governance.



#### **ANDERS AND DORRIT'S COMMUNITY PARK**

Thanks to the generosity of Anders and Dorrit Olesen, this land became a community park in February 2012.

The property was thoroughly enjoyed by the Olesens, with farm animals, beautiful gardens, views of Mount Benson, and the Millstone River meandering through the southern corner. Upon their passing, the Olesens gifted the property to the Regional District of Nanaimo for all to enjoy as a public park.

Materials from their home, including foundation walls and patio bricks, were used to create seating in an outdoor amphitheatre for outdoor learning and nature appreciation.

## MAINTAINING THE STATUS QUO:

With the expected population growth over the next 20 years, most electoral areas will require additional parkland to maintain the current provision. In total, 247 hectares of community parkland across all electoral areas would need to be acquired to match the current provision of community parkland.

Developing parks and trails master plans will help determine a suitable amount of parkland for each electoral area.



*Thelma Griffiths Community Park, Area A*

**Table 16.** Provision of Community Parkland by Electoral Area

Electoral Area	Community Parkland 2021 (ha)	2021 Census Population	Community Parkland hectares per 1,000 people	2041 Projected Population	How much parkland would be needed to maintain current provision? (ha)
<b>A</b>	32	7,481	4.3	8,678	5
<b>B</b>	512	4,500	114	5,760	143
<b>C</b>	40	3,344	12	5,785	29
<b>E</b>	30	6,765	4.4	9,471	12
<b>F</b>	40	8,216	4.9	12,160	19
<b>G</b>	54	8,109	6.7	10,785	18
<b>H</b>	54	4,291	12.6	5,922	21
<b>Total:</b>	<b>762</b>	<b>42,706</b>	<b>17.84</b>	<b>58,560</b>	<b>1009 ha (an increase of 247 ha)</b>

Source: Statistics Canada, 2001 and 2021 Canadian Census

# COMMUNITY PARKS AND TRAILS FUNDING AND GOVERNANCE

## Funding for Community Park Acquisition

Funding the direct purchase of land for community parks relies on the use of funds from the electoral area cash-in-lieu reserve account and tax revenues. Donations from not-for-profit organizations, private companies, and individuals sometimes supplement parkland purchase funding. For example, the Gabriola Island Land and Trails Trust recently contributed funds towards the purchase of an addition to 707 Community Park in Electoral Area B.

## Funding for Capital Development

The development of community parks and trails is typically funded using a combination of property value tax revenue and senior government grants. Grant revenue sources can include Community Works Funds (CWF) monies provided to the RDN for its electoral areas through the Federal Gas Tax Sharing program.

Other senior-level government grants have funded capital development projects, including the Cedar Skatepark (Area A), Gabriola Skatepark (Area B), Meadowood Community Park playground (Area F) and Dunsmuir Community Park playground (Area H).

The RDN recently approved the implementation of development cost charges (DCC) to benefit community parks in electoral areas A, B, G and H. The RDN Community Park DCCs allow the collection of fees from land developers to help fund the cost of new park and trail infrastructure (but not the acquisition of new parkland). The DCC rates that are charged reflect the impact population growth has on community parks.

## Governance

Each electoral area is guided by a parks and open space advisory committee (POSAC), which is chaired by the electoral area director and is comprised of non-elected, board-appointed volunteers. These advisory committees are open to the public and provide input on the needs and priorities for community parks and trails, including parkland acquisition through the subdivision process, park and trail planning and park development projects.

Community Works Funds (CWF) are administered by the Union of BC Municipalities (UBCM) and allocate federal Gas Tax Funding based on population to each local government in British Columbia including the RDN's 7 electoral areas (A, B, C, E, F, G, H).

CWF monies can be used towards eligible costs such as sport infrastructure for community public use (sports fields, sport courts) and the development of parks, hiking trails and bike paths.

*Benson View  
Regional Trail*



# 4 IDENTIFYING ISSUES AND OPPORTUNITIES

## Content

- ▶ What Was Heard
- ▶ Trends and Challenges
- ▶ Summary of Primary Opportunities and Aspirations



*Beachcomber Regional Park*

**This section examines key issues, gaps and areas for improvement that will form the basis and direction of the Parks and Trails Strategy over the next 10 years.**

Through the public engagement process outlined in Section 2, along with the review of the current parks and trails system, several key challenges are identified and are summarized in the following pages. In addition, an examination of local/regional trends further highlights some of the most pressing issues.

In Section 5, the Vision, Goals and Actions present a way forward, with the intent to resolve the challenges and gaps that have become evident.

# WHAT WAS HEARD

## PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT OUTCOMES

The purpose of the first round of public engagement was to understand what people think of existing parks and trails, note any barriers to the public's enjoyment of parks and trails and to highlight key aspirations for the future.

The feedback gathered from surveys, stakeholder workshops and interviews, and community open houses highlighted the following key aspirations for the future of the RDN parks and trails system:

- **PARTNERSHIPS AND STEWARDSHIP**
- **PARKLAND ACQUISITION**
- **CONCERN FOR THE ENVIRONMENT**
- **MEETING THE NEEDS OF VARIOUS USER GROUPS**
- **EXISTING PARK AMENITIES**
- **TRAIL CONNECTIONS**

Feedback from the first round of engagement was used to develop the draft vision, goals and actions. These were presented and confirmed via an online survey during the second round of public engagement. A detailed summary of the public engagement, including detailed online survey responses, is included in Appendices A and B.

## KEY COMMUNITY VALUES

Round 1 of the public engagement process helped identify what the community values most about the RDN parks and trails system.

The top three values listed by survey respondents are (Q.4):

- Opportunities to experience and enjoy nature (84%),
- The protection of important ecological areas (75%), and
- Opportunities to be active and improve personal health (74%)

Access to waterfronts (rivers, lakes, beaches), trails for multiple activities, views, and variety in recreational opportunities are also strongly valued by respondents.



# KEY ISSUES AND GAPS

## Partnerships and Stewardship

Feedback from both rounds of engagement indicated that, although current efforts to work with partners to deliver the parks and trails system is appreciated, more can be done.

Building on existing partnerships will bring additional benefits to RDN parks and trails in terms of information and data sharing, expanding outdoor programs and volunteer opportunities, and coordinating acquisition priorities to leverage available funding.

The following items were specifically noted as areas where the RDN can improve:

- Increase the number of agreements with MOSAIC to improve public access to recreation
- Provide more connecting trails between communities/areas of interest (cycle and walk)
- Provide more equestrian facilities (eg. trailer parking, staging areas)
- Create a volunteer policy and guidelines
- Improve wildlife management
- Improve wayfinding and signage
- Improve responsiveness
- Improve education and interpretation
- Improve the delivery of operations and maintenance
- Increase collaboration with First Nations

All of these suggestions, to varying degrees, speak to the importance of fostering partnerships and encouraging careful stewardship of parklands to provide the experiences the community desires.

This feedback was used to inform the development of the following goals, all of which were supported during the second round of engagement:



**GOAL 1: STRENGTHEN PARTNERSHIPS WITH FIRST NATION GOVERNMENTS, OTHER GOVERNMENTS, LANDOWNERS AND NON-PROFIT AGENCIES**



**GOAL 2: COLLABORATE WITH FIRST NATIONS ON PARK PLANNING AND DESIGN**



**GOAL 7: INCREASE VOLUNTEERING AND LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES WITHIN THE PARKS AND TRAILS SYSTEM**





## Parkland Acquisition

The question of whether to allocate resources to acquire new regional parkland or to provide improvements to existing parks and trails was asked during round 1 engagement. In general, respondents support a balanced approach, with over 70% of respondents agreeing to a 50/50+ distribution between acquisitions and improvements.

The number and distribution of regional parks and trails are the most dissatisfying aspects of the RDN's regional parks system according to survey respondents, which mirrors the public support for additional acquisition. Many of the open-ended comments speak to the need to prioritize acquisition of land to protect it from development and ensure it is safeguarded for conservation or recreation purposes.

Specific to Community Parks and Trails, the top priorities for new or improved community parks as per the survey responses are to "Protect the community's biodiversity and sensitive ecosystems" (59%), "Provide trail connections between neighbourhoods and communities" (49%) and to "Foster a connection with nature" (40%). These responses highlight the value the public has for protecting and stewarding the environment and for trail connections.

This feedback was used to inform the development of the following goals, all of which were supported during the second round of engagement:



**GOAL 3: IDENTIFY AND PRESERVE IMPORTANT NATURAL AREAS THROUGH PARKLAND ACQUISITION**



**GOAL 4: PROTECT AND ENHANCE NATURAL PARKLAND AREAS THROUGH MANAGEMENT AND RESTORATION**



**GOAL 6: ENHANCE AND DEVELOP TRAIL CONNECTIONS**

## Concern for the Environment

Most participants in the Round 1 engagement indicated that protection of natural areas and special ecosystems was important to them. There were a large portion (73/352) of the open-ended comments that focussed on the need to conserve/acquire/protect ecological areas and habitats, with several comments stating concern for the health of the environment, ecosystems, and habitat loss due to over-development in the RDN.

The need for parkland acquisition ahead of habitat loss was noted, as well as the importance of preserving large parks that provide significant benefits to wildlife, carbon sequestration, aquifer protection and generally buffering the effects of climate change. Respondents to the online survey (Q.8) ranked “Nature preserves (with limited public access)” as the second topmost priority for new regional park and trail additions, following “Regional Trail Connections between Communities.” The addition of “Mountain or Alpine Parks” ranked third.

This feedback was used to inform the development of the following goals, both of which were supported by the public in the second round of engagement:



**GOAL 3: IDENTIFY AND PRESERVE IMPORTANT NATURAL AREAS THROUGH PARKLAND ACQUISITION**

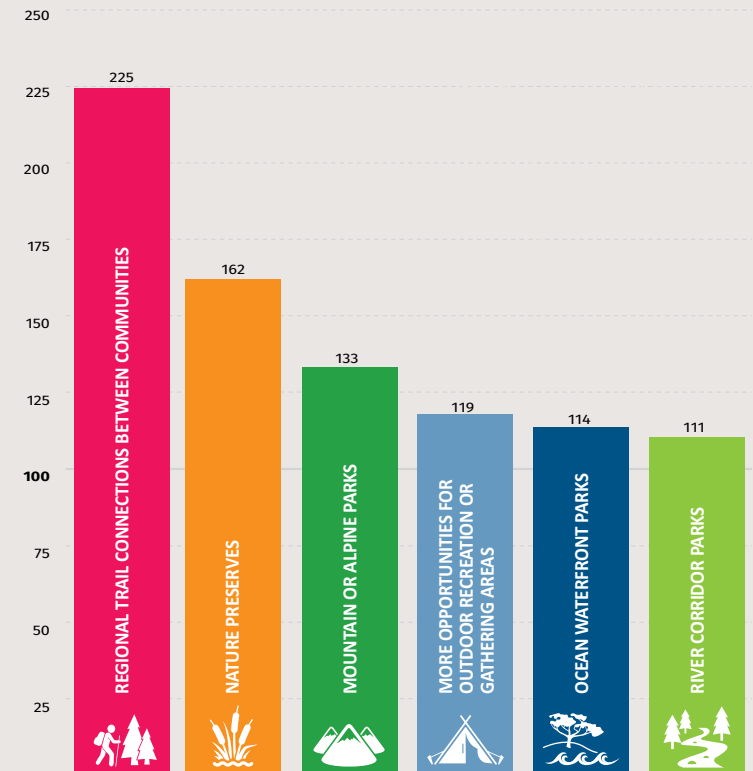


**GOAL 4: PROTECT AND ENHANCE NATURAL PARKLAND AREAS THROUGH MANAGEMENT AND RESTORATION**



**Q8**

**If there are new additions to the regional parks and trails, what do you think the priorities should be? (Pick 3)**



**Figure 8.** The Top Six Priorities in Response to Question 8.

The Round 1 engagement also identified a desire for the RDN to better manage its existing parks and trails, highlighting a proactive approach and the designation of specific areas to protect important natural areas. There was a strong emphasis on conservation from those who attended the workshop and open house in Qualicum Beach, with a focus on preservation of the French Creek Estuary.

## Meeting the needs of various user-groups

Survey respondents from the first round of engagement were mostly satisfied with overall maintenance of regional parks and with ease of getting to the parks and trails. However, feedback also indicated a frustration in the competing interests for park use. Several comments through the online survey, workshops and open houses referenced a lack of designated areas for some recreational user groups (e.g. horseback riding, ATV, rock climbing) and a lack of trail users' understanding of how to share trails or designated trails which can lead to user conflicts between horseback riding, ATVs, walking, and mountain biking.

Respondents were moderately satisfied with both the variety of recreational opportunities within regional parks (21% Very Satisfied, 38% Somewhat Satisfied) and with the physical accessibility within the parks and trails (36% Very Satisfied, 39% Somewhat Satisfied) (Q5). There were several mentions in the online survey for a desire to have a variety of recreational opportunities offered at Regional Parks. "Variety" was in the top mentioned themes for vision of the Parks and Trails Strategy at the Open Houses.

When asked specifically about accessibility and if "all different types of abilities are able to enjoy the parks and trails in the Regional District of Nanaimo," workshop participants indicated that improving access for those with mobility issues is an important consideration. While not all parks are accessible, such as those with steep terrain, it is important to identify opportunities and prioritize accessibility upgrades at those parks and trails where it is feasible. The concept of an accessibility audit was mentioned to measure the degree of accessibility in RDN parks and make suggestions for improvements, perhaps first focusing on those parks that are most frequently visited. "Accessibility" was also one of the top mentioned themes for vision at the Open House.

This feedback was used to inform the development of the following goal, which was supported during the second round of engagement:



### **GOAL 5: PROVIDE WELL-MAINTAINED PARKS AND TRAILS FOR A VARIETY OF RECREATIONAL ACTIVITIES**



## Existing Park Amenities

When parks users were asked about the quantity and quality of specific park amenities, respondents indicated dissatisfaction with trail signage/maps and washrooms, both of which received the highest numbers of responses indicating Somewhat or Very Dissatisfied for both Regional and Community parks and trails. Access to ocean and river front were also among the amenities that had higher levels of dissatisfaction compared to the other amenities polled.

Results also indicate dissatisfaction with boat launches and general satisfaction with mountain bike trails. As these amenities serve a targeted user group, the results tend to reflect the opinions of that group, not necessarily general park users.

When asked what the focus on spending should be for regional improvements over the next 10 years (Q.7), improving regional trail connections ranked first, followed by improving washrooms, signage and parking.

In terms of barriers to visiting Regional Parks, nearly half (46%) of respondents indicated that they've experienced no barriers. The top two limitations to visiting regional parks selected by survey respondents are: that they are too busy (14%) and that they are not able to find information about Regional Parks (12%).

This feedback was used to inform the development of the following goal, which was supported during the second round of engagement:



**GOAL 5: PROVIDE WELL-MAINTAINED PARKS AND TRAILS FOR A VARIETY OF RECREATIONAL ACTIVITIES**





## Trail Connections

Support for trails, both at the regional and community scale, came through strongly in the engagement process. Hiking, walking, and running are the most popular activities in Regional Parks (Q.2). Providing trail connections between neighbourhoods and communities ranked as the second most important priority for Community Park improvements, followed by the protection of biodiversity and sensitive ecosystems (Q.12).

According to survey respondents, the most important focus for spending on Regional Parks in the next 10 years is to “Improve regional trail connections” (55%). The third most important focus is to “Improve mountain bike trails” (31%), followed by “Improve washrooms, signage and parking” (33%) (Q.7).

While mountain bike trails were explicitly listed in the online survey, the open-ended comments and workshop participants highlighted the inequity in designated trails for other user groups, particularly equestrians and ATV users. Several comments reference the desire for better multi-use/shared trail spaces.

Specific to the mountain biking community, many comments spoke to the untapped tourism potential for the region (referencing Cumberland and Whistler as examples) and expressed a desire for more trails around the Westwood plateau and DND/rifle range lands.

Workshop attendees voiced the importance of Community Trails, specifically noting that trails from park to park are ideal whenever possible, but that parks are also destinations so may not need to be connected by trails. More walking and cycling trails connecting communities with areas of interest is desired.

There were comments on the importance of Regional Trail connections from Nanaimo to Nanoose and from Nanoose to Parksville, highlighting the potential in the rail corridor. In addition, bridging the gaps over the Nanaimo River to complete the TCT and connecting the Morden Colliery Regional Trail were also flagged by engagement participants. The complexity of some of these projects is substantial, including the need for land use agreements and engineering-based capital projects, such as bridges. A realistic approach to these challenging projects, in terms of time, funding and expertise is required.

This feedback was used to inform the development of the following goals:



**GOAL 5: PROVIDE WELL-MAINTAINED PARKS AND TRAILS FOR A VARIETY OF RECREATIONAL ACTIVITIES**



**GOAL 6: ENHANCE AND DEVELOP TRAIL CONNECTIONS**

# TRENDS AND CHALLENGES

In addition to the input from local RDN residents through the public engagement process, there are overarching trends and regional issues that shine more light on the primary issues facing parks and trails. Most of these trends are not unique to the RDN but rather affect regional districts and local governments throughout BC. There is an opportunity to learn from others as the RDN explores a strategic way forward for its parks and trails.

## Competition for land

A growing population will increase the demand for the protection of additional important natural areas, access to nature and recreation opportunities. Land prices are high and are expected to continue to increase.



**Challenge:** Continue to strategically add land to the regional and community parks and trails system.

## Increasing demand for parks and trails

As the population of the Regional District grows, so does the number of visitors to our parks and trails. Tourism is also growing on Vancouver Island, with outdoor recreation and experiences ranking as one of the top four activities for tourists to the Island.

The COVID-19 pandemic has also placed added pressure on parks and trails as people look to the outdoors as a safe place to exercise and socialize. This increased popularity of parks and trails means that some have become increasingly congested. Trail use on some popular trails has increased by over 45% in the last five years.

Increased levels of use make the existing park system work harder. This contributes to increased operational needs and the potential need for more amenities at existing parks and trails. There may also be the need to increase the parks and trails portfolio with new acquisitions to offset the use at more highly visited parks and trails.



**Challenge:** Balance the addition of new parkland and trails with the development of existing parks and trails to meet increasing demand.



## Increasing demand for active transportation connections

Many regions throughout BC are investing in trail infrastructure, at both the community and regional level, to encourage active transportation and recreation-tourism. With greater pressure to reduce carbon emissions, local governments can support modes of active transportation by further establishing local and regional trail networks and building a strong active transportation network.

Throughout BC, rural roads and undeveloped road allowances are managed by the Province through the Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure. Opportunities for safe pedestrian and cycling routes between homes and regular destinations such as schools, commercial areas, parks, and recreation facilities exist in undeveloped road allowances and alongside developed roadways. However, providing active transportation opportunities is not within the current Provincial mandate. In recent years, regional districts have begun to develop and maintain

trails under permit with the Province to address the public's demand for safe local trail demand for safe local trail connections. Trail development alongside active vehicle routes is challenging for the RDN Parks Service to deliver due to the complexity and cost of design, construction and ongoing maintenance requirements.

Ongoing communication and collaboration between the Province and BC's regional districts in support of roadside pathways and trails will help clarify roles and resources to deliver valuable active transportation connections for rural communities.



**Challenge:** Clarify regional and community trail priorities and how they connect to the active transportation network.





## Supporting and expanding the social benefits of the parks and trails system and honouring cultural significance

Volunteers are critical to the ongoing stewardship and enhancement of parks and trails. Strong relationships with non-profit organizations and active community members can have a significant and lasting impact on the quality of parks in our region. Building a robust volunteer program could help to alleviate some of the pressures of park maintenance and help with accomplishing some of the ecosystem monitoring and management actions presented in the Management Plans. In exchange, the volunteers are rewarded with a unique experience that allows them to connect with nature, give back to the community and be honoured for their work towards improving the natural environment.

Parks also serve as outdoor classrooms and learning environments. The RDN provides outdoor park programming and works with schools, post-secondary

education institutions, and community groups to deliver education in parks.

Community and regional parks are often located on land rich in archeological, cultural, and ecological significance. Collaborating with First Nations to incorporate Indigenous cultural and historical perspectives and preserving and protecting culturally significant areas is a priority for the RDN as part of its ongoing commitment to reconciliation.



**Challenge:** How to expand volunteering, educational and cultural programs within sustainable operational budgets of the RDN Parks Service.

## Addressing climate change and natural hazard risk

The effects of climate change can be seen worldwide with extended temperature increases, hotter and dryer summers; wetter falls and winters; increased fire risk; more inclement and extreme weather events; rising sea levels and storm surge damage; increased flooding; potential impacts to drinking water sources; as well as biodiversity losses. These changes directly impact parks and trails and the natural ecosystems they protect.

Wetter conditions and an increase in unpredictable storm events affect park and trail maintenance with more risk of erosion, wood debris clean-up from windstorms, and damage to park infrastructure.

Changing climate patterns also affect how park visitors use parks. With warmer spring and summer seasons, parks and trails may see longer peak use seasons. Certain parks see increased use in extreme heat events when visitors flock to the ocean, river, and lake parks to cool down.



**Challenge:** Adapt to the impacts of climate change by promoting ecosystem resilience, preserving cultural resources, and protecting facilities and infrastructure.

## Shifting demographics and park user experiences

An aging population highlights the importance of providing opportunities for the elderly and those with mobility challenges to get outside and be active.

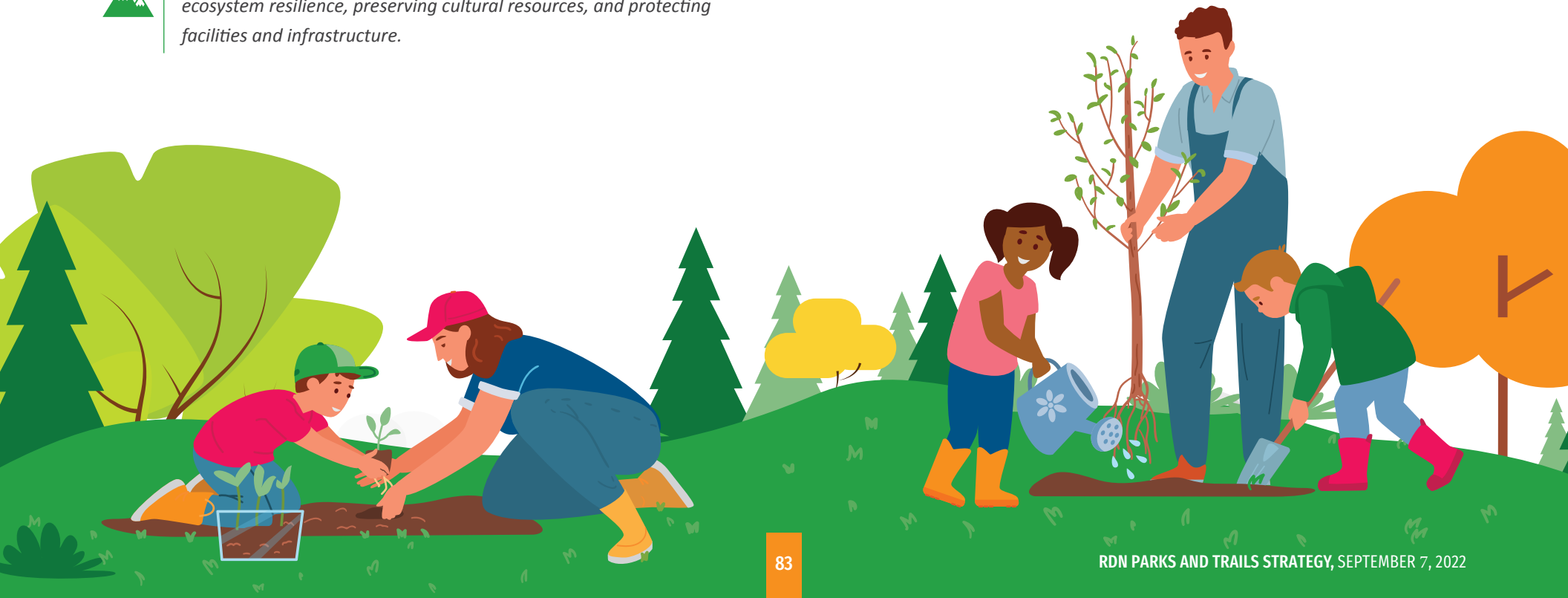
Housing in the region remains affordable compared to major cities in BC. Lower housing prices are attractive to young families and implies a trend towards more young children and teens moving to the area.

Whether serving an elderly population or growing numbers of young children, accessible design enables all park visitors to enjoy the outdoors.

RDN Parks and Trails sees a diversity of park visitors with varying recreational interests. Planning for a range of park and trail experiences will serve the increasing demand for variety in RDN parks and trails.

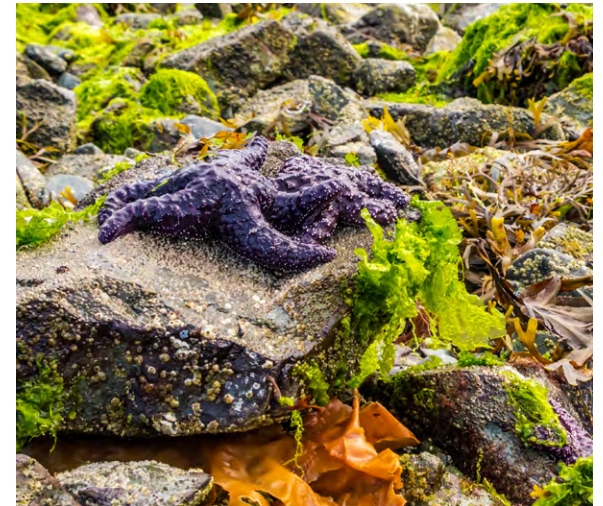


**Challenge:** Continue providing a parks and trails system relevant to residents throughout the region.



# SUMMARY OF PRIMARY OPPORTUNITIES AND ASPIRATIONS

- Identify important natural areas and protect them from development through parkland acquisition
- Continue to pursue large parklands because of the significant ecological benefits, as well as public access to more remote, quiet, natural areas (specific locations mentioned were the French Creek Estuary, the E&N Railway, the Dark Side climbing area, Hamilton Marsh, Nanaimo River corridor, and lands around Mt. Benson)
- Improve trail connections from communities to parks and within communities
- Improve accessibility of parks (getting to and within the parks)
- Improve information, signage, and maps to increase the use and awareness of parks and trails
- Improve and/or increase washroom facilities at RDN parks and trails
- Continue efforts to partner with other agencies, land managers, and community organizations
- Improve access and management for a variety of park and trail users



**Key words from the community that support the formation of a guiding vision for the Parks and Trails Strategy:**

- Connection/Interconnected
- Accessibility
- Conservation/Preservation
- Variety
- Natural/Ecosystems/Wildlife
- Education
- Healthy and active

A photograph of a family of four walking through a dense forest. The father is on the right, wearing a dark jacket, holding the hand of a young boy in a red jacket. The mother is in the center, wearing a purple jacket, holding the hand of a young girl in a pink jacket. They are walking on a path covered with fallen leaves and moss. The forest is filled with tall, thin trees and sunlight filtering through the canopy. A large, mossy log lies in the foreground.

# 5 THE PATH FORWARD

## Content

► Vision for the Future

► Goals and Actions

# VISION FOR THE FUTURE

## VISION

The Vision for RDN parks and trails provides an overarching guide for all park projects and parkland acquisitions over the next 20 years. The Vision emerged through a review of past vision statements for regional and community parks in combination with new input from stakeholders and the public during the Parks and Trails Strategy consultation process. This single vision is intended to encompass both regional and community parks and provide a unified approach to the overall parks system.

*Regional and community parks and trails in the RDN provide welcoming and diverse opportunities for people of all ages and abilities to recreate and connect with nature and each other.*

*Through strong local partnerships and collaboration with First Nations, natural areas are recognized for their cultural importance and preserved for ecosystem conservation and climate change mitigation.*

*Regional and community parks and trails in the RDN support the health and wellbeing of all residents in the region.*



# GOALS

To set the course for arriving at the desired vision, seven goals are listed below. Each goal is supported by specific actions that will allow the RDN to reach the goals for Regional and Community Parks and Trails over the next 10 years.

The seven goals that will support the RDN in achieving its vision are:



**GOAL 1 :**  
**STRENGTHEN PARTNERSHIPS WITH FIRST NATION GOVERNMENTS, OTHER GOVERNMENTS, LANDOWNERS AND NON-PROFIT AGENCIES**



**GOAL 2:**  
**COLLABORATE WITH FIRST NATIONS ON PARK PLANNING AND DESIGN**



**GOAL 3:**  
**IDENTIFY AND PRESERVE IMPORTANT NATURAL AREAS THROUGH PARKLAND ACQUISITION**



**GOAL 4:**  
**PROTECT AND ENHANCE NATURAL PARKLAND AREAS THROUGH MANAGEMENT AND RESTORATION**



**GOAL 5:**  
**PROVIDE WELL-MAINTAINED PARKS AND TRAILS FOR A VARIETY OF RECREATIONAL ACTIVITIES**



**GOAL 6:**  
**ENHANCE AND DEVELOP TRAIL CONNECTIONS**



**GOAL 7:**  
**INCREASE VOLUNTEERING AND LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES WITHIN THE PARKS AND TRAILS SYSTEM**



**GOAL 1:**  
**Strengthen Partnerships with First Nation Governments,  
other Governments, Landowners and Non-Profit Agencies**

Many of the RDN's existing parks and trails exist due to partnerships or land use agreements with other agencies or individuals. At both the regional and community scale, agreements offer a valuable avenue to secure and manage parkland, whether for recreational access or conservation purposes.

The delivery of a public parks and trails system in the region is dependent on a complex web of agreements and partnerships. Examples of partnerships span the full range of acquiring and managing parks, including:

- Parkland purchase agreements with non-profit agencies that fundraise towards the purchase of parkland (examples include: Moorecroft Regional Park and Mount Benson Regional Park).
- Land use agreements with landowners that permit public recreational access over private property (examples include: the La Selva Place Trail, the Trans Canada Trail).
- Land use agreements with provincial and public agencies (i.e. Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure and Province of BC) that authorize RDN management of recreational access over Crown land (examples include: beach accesses on undeveloped road allowances across the RDN, the E&N Rail Trail, Benson View Regional Trail, Ammonite Falls Regional Trail, Village Way Trail).
- Park management agreements, sometimes as conservation covenants, with non-profit agencies (examples include: Englishman River Regional Park, Coats Marsh Regional Park, Moorecroft Regional Park, Mount Benson Regional Park).

The continued success of parkland acquisition and management, both for recreational access and conservation purposes depend on strong partnerships with private and public entities.

The RDN is also committed to deepening its relationships with local First Nations and working together on park management and conservation initiatives.



The Moorecroft Regional Park Management Plan provides an example of a collaborative approach with the Snaw-naw-as First Nation. It envisions how this park could be managed and developed in a way that conveys the rich cultural history of the land.

The following two Actions support Goal 1:

## → ACTIONS

### 1.1 Continue to establish and manage land use agreements with private and public agencies for recreational and conservation purposes.

The RDN holds agreements with several agencies and private land owners for park and trail access, including the Trans Canada Trail, the Arrowsmith CPR Trail, the Coombs to Parksville Rail Trail, the Lighthouse Country Regional Trail, and many other regional and community parks and trails on private and public lands.

On Vancouver Island, most forested lands are privately held and managed for forestry purposes. Fortunately, successful agreements have been put in place to allow public recreational access over some of these private lands. With increasing concern over fire risk associated with public access, these land use agreements face additional restrictions. The RDN has an important role to play in communicating responsible recreational use of these lands to foster strong relationships with the landowners and ensure agreements can continue into the future.

Within the RDN, roads are managed by the Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure (MoTI). This network of developed and undeveloped roads offers many trail and beach access opportunities. Working collaboratively with MoTI and establishing land use agreements within key road corridors can help improve the overall trail network in the RDN, facilitate active transportation initiatives, and provide access to recreational areas and beaches.

In some cases, agreements with individual or private strata landowners provide public recreational access over private lands.

These park and trail acquisitions are not possible without the legal documents and negotiations that bring them to life.

### 1.2 Identify and foster partnerships with First Nations and non-profit organizations to acquire and manage conservation and recreation lands.

Non-profit organizations have been valuable partners by supporting acquisition initiatives through fund-raising and garnering community support. These organizations also provide ongoing ecological monitoring and park and trail management input.

Protecting the natural environment for the wildlife habitat and ecosystem values it provides is critical. The RDN must continue to work with conservation and stewardship organizations and First Nations communities to protect, educate and conserve vast areas of natural land.

In addition to land conservation, recreational activities in parks could be co-managed and delivered through the lens of First Nations knowledge and teachings. A diversity of opportunities within parks will bring people into the natural world and teach the stories of the land.

Some well-established local clubs and societies bring value to the region through activity-specific knowledge in recreational and trail system development and management. As discussed further in Action 5.1, there is a desire for more variety in recreational opportunities within RDN parks and trails. Fostering these partnerships will allow the RDN to lean on the expertise of specialized groups for best practices and cultivate a collaborative approach to ongoing park and trail management and development.



## GOAL 2: Collaborate with First Nations on Park Planning and Design

The RDN is situated within the traditional territories of the Coast Salish Peoples including the Snuneymuxw First Nation, Snaw-naw-as First Nation, Qualicum First Nation, K'ómoks First Nation, Hupačasath First Nation and Stz'uminus First Nation. Both community and regional parks are often located on land that is rich in archeological, cultural, and ecological significance. Building collaborative relationships with First Nations, incorporating Indigenous cultural and historical perspectives, and preserving and protecting culturally significant areas is a priority for the RDN as part of its ongoing commitment to reconciliation.

The following two Actions support Goal 2:

### → ACTIONS

#### 2.1 In collaboration with First Nations, explore opportunities to incorporate cultural education and interpretation into park design and development.

Through collaboration with First Nations, explore opportunities to share the rich cultural and natural history of the region in park design and development. Examples include undertaking a review of the RDN's Parks Naming Policy to include consideration of Indigenous cultural and historical interests, featuring cultural education through appropriate signage, promoting ecological stewardship within parks, and enhancing the visibility of the local First Nations with key built features and signage.

Es-hw Sme~nts<sup>2</sup> Community Park in Nanoose Bay is an example of a park with a Hul'qumi'num name that arose through consultation and a naming ceremony with Snaw-naw-as First Nation.

#### 2.2 In collaboration with First Nations, explore opportunities to protect important cultural and natural areas.

Through collaboration with First Nations, explore initiatives to improve the protection of cultural areas and sites, support traditional uses, and enhance visibility of Indigenous languages, art, and culture within RDN parks and trails.

Through regional park management plans, learn and incorporate site-specific Traditional Knowledge and explore opportunities to collaborate in the management of regional parks, both for recreational value and nature conservation.

<sup>2</sup> Es-hw Sme~nts translates to "seal rock".





### GOAL 3:

#### Identify and Preserve Important Natural Areas Through Parkland Acquisition

Preserving important natural areas is critical to human and environmental well-being. Our local natural areas perform important ecological functions which support and preserve biodiversity within the RDN. With rapid development in our region, RDN parks and trails play a crucial role in offsetting the loss and degradation of natural ecosystems by preserving representative landscapes such as forests, rivers, wetlands, shorelines, and alpine areas. These important natural areas provide vital habitats for wildlife, hold and filter freshwater, purify the air, and offer numerous other environmental benefits to our region.

The parks system must establish a clear relationship between conservation lands and human use to ensure the long-term sustainability of the region's valuable natural wilderness. The parks system will include a mix of lands – some with a strong conservation emphasis with little or no human presence and some that can support public access to nature and varied recreational opportunities.

The following two Actions support Goal 3:

#### → ACTIONS

##### 3.1 Develop a regional parks acquisition strategy to guide parkland acquisition for conservation and recreation purposes.

An updated acquisition strategy will focus on building a system of parks and connected areas that conserve lands for biodiversity and are resilient to the impacts of climate change, land-use change and increased park use.

Developing the acquisition strategy will require a multi-jurisdictional and collaborative approach to understanding the region's natural assets and acquisition goals. It will include, but is not limited to:

- Collaborating with local conservation organizations, member municipalities, the Province of BC, and First Nations to identify and map areas within the

***RDN Parks play an important role in securing and acquiring important natural areas. The region's long-term sustainability is enhanced when its natural areas are preserved. This directly impacts the quality of life for all residents in the region.***

RDN that have high biodiversity values and offer quality habitat for wildlife and contribute to broadening the network of natural areas.

- Revising the existing Regional Park Acquisition Criteria and Rating Framework to provide a clear foundation for decisions on future parkland acquisitions. A set of conservation and planning criteria will be developed and used to evaluate the conservation potential and feasibility of acquisitions. Conservation criteria could consider ecological value, habitat diversity, size, and ecological connectivity, among other considerations. Planning criteria could consider lands already on the acquisition list, connectivity to other park or conservation lands, availability, cost, vulnerability and threat from development and timber harvesting, and compatibility with other RDN plans and initiatives.
- Identifying, assessing, and prioritizing which natural areas should be targeted for parkland acquisition in the next 10–20 years using the revised acquisition criteria and rating framework.
- Developing a sustainable funding model to ensure parkland acquisitions are achievable.

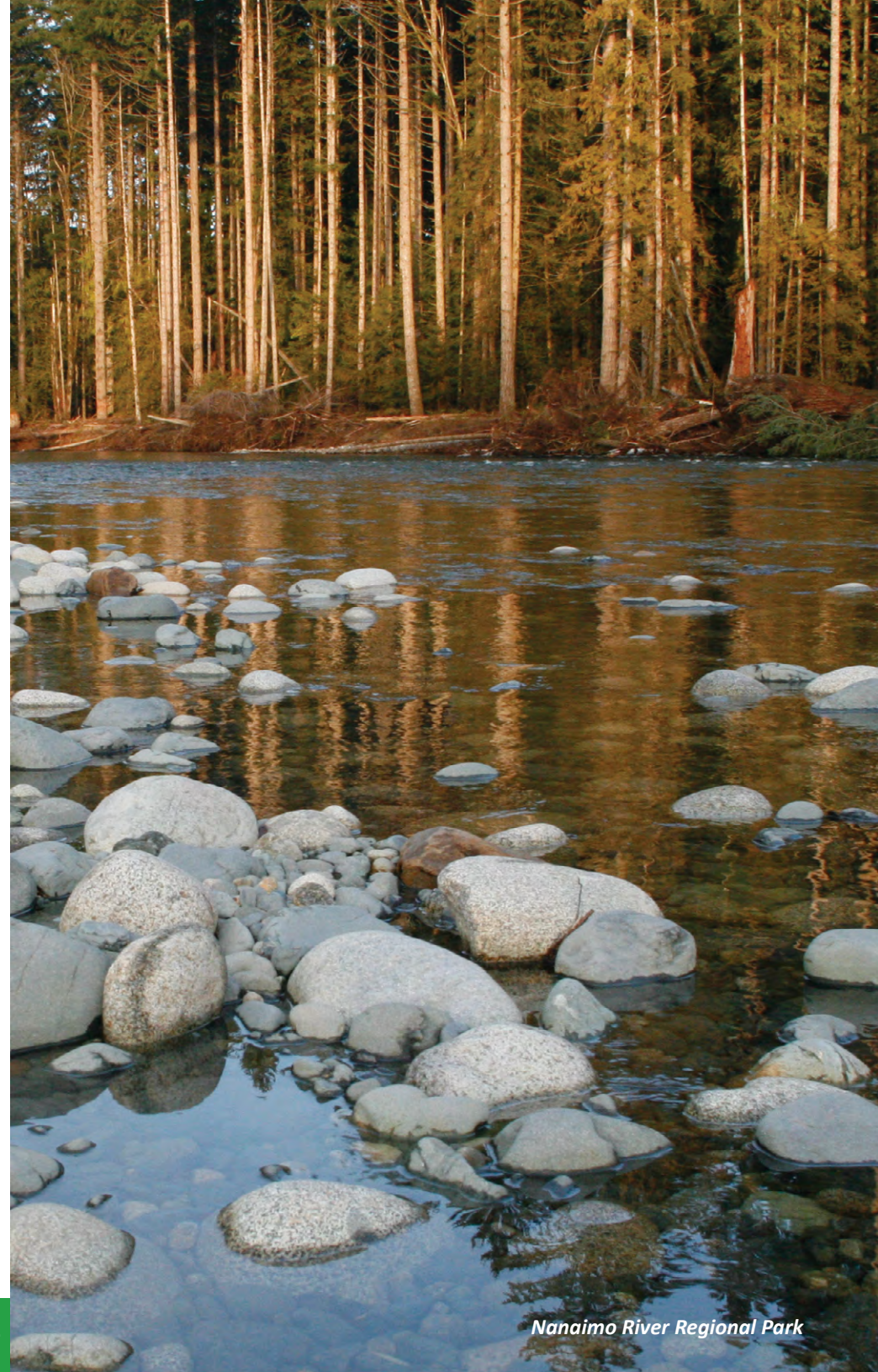


### 3.2 Reassess the Regional Park Classification System.

A park classification system helps provide a clear picture of how parks are used and managed and what level of public access to expect. As the park system expands, further refinement of the classification system is needed to help distinguish the various roles individual parks play within the regional parks system. To help communicate the different types of regional parks to the public, the RDN may consider incorporating the management class within the park name. For example, changing 'Coats Marsh Regional Park' to 'Coats Marsh Regional Conservation Area.'

One of the key deliverables under this action is creating a new 'Undeveloped Area' management class for park properties the RDN acquires but will develop at a later date. As land costs continue to rise, it is critical to secure land as soon as possible before prices escalate. The ability to designate newly acquired parkland as an 'Undeveloped Area' would support the RDN's priority of acquiring additional parkland and may be a valuable tool to allow land purchase without the immediate funding requirements for development and maintenance.

Although undeveloped, there may be informal recreational use of the new parkland. A management direction statement will provide the basis for ongoing baseline funding to manage risks on the land and describe protected area values, management issues and concerns. Regional Park lands would be held in 'undeveloped' status until funding is available for park development. A park management planning process will then guide park development and determine the park's long-term park classification.





## GOAL 4:

### Protect and Enhance Natural Parkland Areas Through Management and Restoration

There is an ongoing need to steward the land to ensure natural habitats, landscapes, and cultural features are not at risk of degradation. In a park setting, some common factors negatively impact ecosystems. These include disturbances to native vegetation and wildlife due to soil erosion from heavy trail use in steep areas or from park visitors moving off-trail or establishing new unauthorized trails. The loss of biodiversity and genetic diversity due to the introduction and establishment of invasive species and the disruption and loss of wildlife corridors also harm ecosystems. Certain recreational activities, such as off-leash dog-walking or recreational vehicle use, can be more detrimental to wildlife and vegetation than other passive activities.

The RDN can support the ongoing protection and enhancement of natural parkland areas in RDN parks by continuing with initiatives that strive to balance the provision of recreation with the preservation of natural habitats. Internal park zoning limiting specific uses must be shown on maps and be clearly communicated to park visitors on-site and in promotional materials.

The following three Actions support Goal 4:

#### → ACTIONS

##### 4.1 Update park management plans and prioritize key action items related to sensitive ecosystem preservation.

Existing regional parks protect a wide range of habitats and landscapes. Many of the action items within the existing park management plans focus on preserving and enhancing the natural ecosystems within RDN parks.

Through the management plan renewal process, a status update of the outstanding action items within each park management plan will be completed. The action items that support balancing the preservation of natural habitats with human use will be identified and prioritized.

##### 4.2 Develop and implement an invasive species management plan to rehabilitate, maintain and enhance natural ecosystems and biodiversity in parks.

Invasive species are non-native plants, animals or other species that harm the natural biodiversity of an area. If parks are to serve as a refuge for our natural ecosystems, then action must be taken to mitigate the impacts of invasive species.

An invasive species management plan will offer a step-by-step process to begin to tackle invasive species management and restoration within both regional and community parks. There are opportunities for collaboration with other organizations and volunteers who aim to protect natural ecosystems.

##### 4.3 Develop a wildfire and risk assessment strategy to mitigate fire risk in regional and community parks.

With more people getting out to explore parks, hazard risk assessments and mitigation plans to prepare for unexpected emergencies are becoming increasingly more important.

The risk of wildfires is predicted to increase as climate change affects rainfall patterns and forest health. A wildfire and risk assessment strategy is particularly important for areas at the interface of forests and residential areas.

Park specific prescriptions may arise through the strategy, taking care to acknowledge that fire risk management is not intended to negatively impact that natural ecosystem.



## GOAL 5:

### Provide Well-Maintained Parks and Trails for a Variety of Recreational Activities

Through the public engagement for this Strategy, it was clear that the community desires a variety of park development and recreational opportunities. Park users want to see a diversity of park development within the system, from natural wilderness trails to accessible community parks and playgrounds. They want a broad cross-section of recreation options for mountain biking, equestrians, off-leash dogs, or rock-climbing areas.

The community parks and trails system has seen rapid growth, with some electoral areas seeing more park acquisitions and improvements than others. This discrepancy is partly due to different electoral area development patterns, which in turn affect parkland dedications and the tax base to support park and trail improvements. Community interests and needs also vary between electoral areas, and some prioritize funding for park and trail acquisitions and improvement projects more than others. As such, there is an uneven distribution of parks and trails across the seven electoral areas.

Access to greenspace and recreational areas is a major contributor to health and wellbeing. All residents of the RDN need access to welcoming and well-maintained parks and trails that offer a diverse range of recreational opportunities.

On top of an expanding park and trail system, climate change puts increasing pressure on all aspects of maintenance and operations. Natural areas are at a higher risk due to drought, fire, flood, pests, and disease. The growing demand for variety and well-maintained amenities, combined with the natural fluctuations in weather and seasonal extremes, means that the RDN Parks Division will require increased resources to manage the park system so that it can continue to be well-maintained, safe, and meet the needs of a variety of users.

The following four Actions support Goal 5:

#### → ACTIONS

##### 5.1 Complete parks and trails master plans for each electoral area.

Expanding on the work that was carried out in the Community Parks and Trails Strategy for Electoral Areas E through H (2014), developing a master plan for each electoral area will generate a visual map that easily demonstrates parkland inequity and high priority areas for parkland and trail connections.

Gaps in the parks and trails system will become evident during the process and can be flagged as projects to consider in future planning.

Factors to consider in the masterplan for each electoral area include:

- Safe connections to schools, recreation centres, and commercial areas;
- Connections to water access points, viewpoints and the regional trail system;
- The creation of local loops to encourage regular use of trails for health and fitness;
- Accessible trails and park amenities wherever feasible;
- Potential park programming opportunities;
- Potential park improvement projects to support recreation;
- User-focused recreational opportunities to minimize user conflict and maximize recreational diversity in RDN parks (ie. dog friendly parks, rock climbing, equestrian trails, beach access, etc.);
- Amenities that are underrepresented or missing.





## 5.2 Identify, develop, and promote specific areas in the parks system where access for all ages and abilities is available.

While providing universal accessibility to all areas of the parks system is not feasible due to rugged terrain and sensitive ecosystems, there are opportunities for improved accessibility within the RDN parks system.

Focusing on popular/high use parks, conducting an accessibility audit of existing regional and community parks will identify trails and amenities that are already accessible. In addition, trails and amenities that have the potential to be upgraded to meet this need can be identified for consideration in short- and long-range financial planning.

Trails and amenities that are suitable for all ages and abilities will be clearly marked on park maps and signage.

## 5.3 Ensure operating funds are sufficient to deliver a well-maintained park system that meets public use levels.

Public feedback indicates that park facilities and maintenance standards are not meeting the demands of current use levels. Increased funding for park operations is required to accommodate growing public use, provide new park facilities and amenities, and expand the parks and trails system.

## 5.4 Support the RDN's development of an asset management system to inform short and long-term budget planning for park asset maintenance and renewal.

Asset management plans are essential for planning the short- and long-term replacement of existing park infrastructure.

Whenever a new park, trail or amenity is added to the inventory, the operations and maintenance costs of the system increase. If operational and life-cycle replacement costs are not considered, the system will get further and further behind, quality of the parks will decline, and there may be increased liability due to deferred maintenance.

The RDN is currently exploring and developing an asset management program. Parks services will continue to support the development of this program and will use it to track financial needs and maintenance upgrades to parks infrastructure over time.





## **GOAL 6:** **Enhance and Develop Trail Connections**

Trail connections to natural areas and local community destinations contribute to the livability of a region and the wellbeing of its residents. Access to nature helps reduce stress and anxiety, encourages social interactions, and provides a low cost/ low barrier opportunity for fitness activities.

Establishing safe on- and off-street trail connections to local community destinations, such as schools and shops, can promote alternative modes of transportation by reducing vehicle dependence, reducing greenhouse gas emissions and increasing physical activity. Enhancing regional trail connections can also contribute to the economy by providing tourism opportunities for visitors to the area.

Through the public engagement process it was clear that trails are an important asset to the community.

The following two Actions support Goal 6:

### **→ ACTIONS**

#### **6.1 Evaluate and update the proposed Regional Trail Network to reaffirm regional trail priorities.**

Part of the vision from the 2005–2015 Regional Parks and Trails Plan is the concept of creating a regional trail system from park to park. Great swaths of potential trail corridor were marked over a conceptual map. Since 2005, some pieces of this vision have come to fruition and others are still far off in the future.

A review of the Regional Trails Network is needed to provide a status update and clarify priorities and targets moving forward. As with Goal 3 (Identify and Preserve Important Natural Areas Through Parkland Acquisition), this review will be an opportunity for the RDN to take stock and align regional trail goals with other jurisdictions and partner agencies or landowners.

The review of the regional trail network will determine if the following initiatives will continue to be a priority:

- Connection of the Lighthouse Country Regional Trail (North and South Loops)
- Completion of the Morden Colliery Regional Trail (South Wellington to Cedar)
- Completion the Trans Canada Trail (Cassidy to South Nanaimo via South Wellington)
- Expansion of the E&N Rail Trail (Top Bridge to Parksville, Parksville to French Creek)
- Cross-boundary opportunities (linking the RDN with adjacent regional districts and member municipalities).

#### **6.2 Review the implementation of regional active transportation planning initiatives and determine approach.**

The RDN Parks Division has been actively involved in developing several roadside trails and road shoulder routes to improve connectivity and active transportation opportunities for area residents. The need and desire come from the community, however, with no existing approach to implementing active transportation initiatives outside RDN municipalities, the Parks Division has fallen into this role. Past and current involvement in active transportation projects by the RDN Parks Division includes the Village Way Path on Gabriola Island, the Arrowsmith Community Trails in Errington, the Parksville to Qualicum Beach Links, and the Coombs to Parksville Rail Trail. There is growing interest in expanding active transportation corridors across the region.

The challenge is that nearly all of these routes exist in road allowances managed by the Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure, with guidelines and engineering standards that are geared towards car-travel. Implementing

a pedestrian path into a landscape designed for vehicles requires a lot of coordination, design consideration and high implementation costs, especially when it is done after the road has been engineered and installed.

To continue serving the needs of RDN communities and delivering active transportation projects, the RDN will need to review the implementation of Active Transportation initiatives and determine how the service will be delivered and by whom (Parks Division, Utilities Division or an expanded service).

If park staff continue to lead these projects, a new or expanded service area with dedicated staff is recommended. If the role is carried out by others, Parks Services should be at the table when active transportation planning is underway.

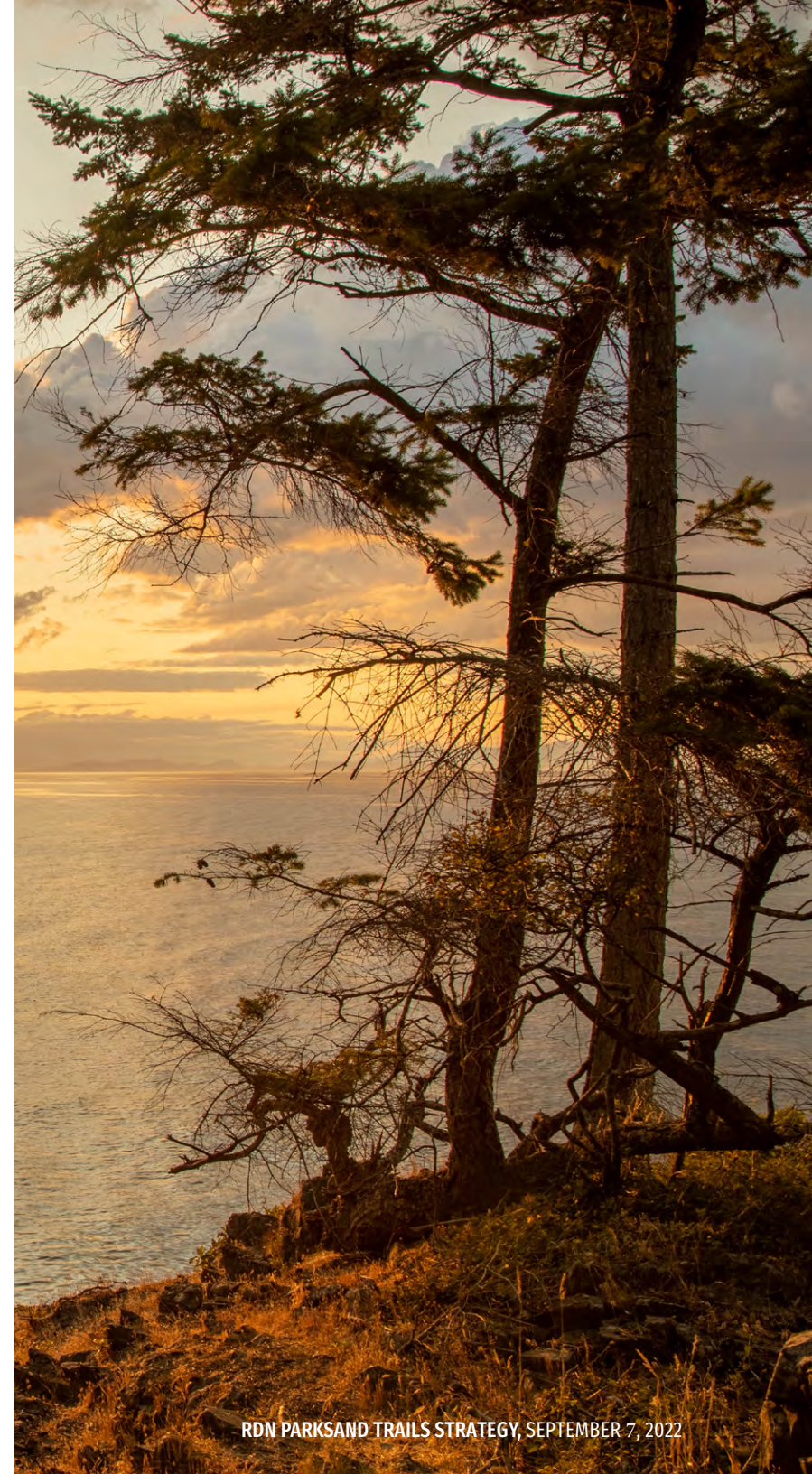


**GOAL 7:**  
**Increase Volunteering, Learning and Programming Opportunities within the Parks and Trails System**

As with strong partnerships with organizations, strong relationships with active members of the community can have a large and lasting impact on the quality of parks in our region. Volunteers are critical to the ongoing stewardship and enhancement of parks and trails. Individuals devote countless hours to serve on advisory committees, fundraise for new park amenities, and get their hands dirty with activities in the parks and trails.

Past attempts to implement an effective volunteer program in RDN parks have failed due to a lack of resources dedicated to the cause. The RDN has an opportunity to tap into an abundance of support from an enthusiastic community who want to make a difference and give back to their local parks and trails.

Our parks also have great potential to serve as outdoor classrooms and learning environments. RDN Recreation Services provides outdoor programs in the park system. Several schools, post-secondary education institutions, and community groups also use RDN parks for educational purposes, administered through park use permits. Through the RDN District 69 Recreation Services Master Plan, completed in 2018, the community expressed a clear desire to see increased recreation programming and expanded recreation infrastructure in RDN parks and trails.



To increase volunteer and learning opportunities in RDN Parks, additional resources, infrastructure, and coordination are required. The benefits are yielded in more residents participating and using parks and trails and increasing awareness and connection to the region's diverse landscapes and ecosystems.

The following two Actions support Goal 7:

## → ACTIONS

### 7.1 Develop and implement a park and trail volunteer program to coordinate and support volunteer-led stewardship projects.

There is significant potential to increase stewardship opportunities in our parks and trails and provide more opportunities for people to get out, be active, and learn in our parks. The need for an improved volunteer program that provides support to individual volunteers, organized community groups and not-for-profit organizations was clearly identified by the feedback gathered through community consultation.

Outcomes of a volunteer program could include:

- a stewardship newsletter
- adopt-a-park and adopt-a-trail programs
- consistent, reliable, and validating interactions with dedicated volunteers
- partnerships with RDN Drinking Water and Watershed Protection on education, research, invasive species management, and citizen science projects

Volunteer management and collaboration requires a specialized skillset that is ideally suited to an individual trained in volunteer coordination and retention, with support from park planning and recreation staff. For the RDN to successfully develop and implement a volunteer program that is rewarding for volunteers and delivers value to the parks and trails system, dedicated RDN staff time is needed.

### 7.2 Enhance the ability to offer programming and educational opportunities by identifying and developing additional infrastructure at key parks.

To enhance the RDN's ability to offer programming and educational opportunities in our parks, key infrastructure including washrooms, drinking water, sufficient parking and school bus access may be required. A review of the barriers to programming at a park-specific level is an important first step toward improving the RDN's ability to facilitate more programs in our parks. Following the review, actions to address the barriers can be prioritized and included within the financial plan.

Specific parks in each electoral area that are most suited to host recreation and education programs would be identified through the creation of parks and trails master plan for each electoral area, as described in Action 5.1. Once the key park projects are implemented, RDN Recreation can increase park programming, camps and education offerings at RDN parks.



*Malaspina Galleries Community Park, Area B*



# 6 IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

## Content

- ▶ RDN Parks and Trails Strategy Implementation Plan Overview
- ▶ Annual Ongoing Actions Budget Implications
- ▶ Short-term Actions - Budget Implications
- ▶ Medium-term Actions - Budget Implications
- ▶ Long-term Actions - Budget Implications

# IMPLEMENTATION PLAN OVERVIEW

This section presents a 10-year plan for delivering the actions identified in the Parks and Trails Strategy.

Most of the actions have a one-time cost to implement, while other actions require ongoing, yearly funding. Each action has been categorized into one of the following time frames for delivery within the next 10 years:

## Time Frames for Implementation

<b>ANNUAL ONGOING</b>	Reoccurring annual costs throughout the 10-year period
<b>SHORT TERM</b>	1–4 years
<b>MEDIUM TERM</b>	4–7 years
<b>LONG TERM</b>	7–10 years



The overall 10-year cost to implement the Parks and Trails Strategy is \$2,940,000. The values are estimates based on current (2022) values and do not include capital or operations costs. Any capital projects or increased operational costs identified through the delivery of these actions will be in addition to the costs identified in the Implementation Plan.

Table 17 provides a summary of the estimated implementation costs for each time frame.

**Table 17.** Summary of Estimated Implementation Costs

	Short-term (1–4 yrs)	Medium Term (4–7 yrs)	Long-Term (7–10 yrs)	TOTAL
<b>Annual Ongoing Costs (\$115,000/yr)</b>	\$460,000	\$345,000	\$345,000	\$1,150,000
<b>One time costs</b>	\$800,000	\$520,000	\$470,000	\$1,790,000
<b>Total Costs</b>	\$1,260,000	\$865,000	\$815,000	\$2,940,000



Table 18 below provides an overview of how all goals and actions will be implemented over the next ten (10) years and provides an overall cost to implement the actions.

**Table 18.** RDN Parks and Trails Strategy Implementation Plan Overview





Action	Description	Responsibility	Service (Regional/ Community)	Implementation budget over 10-year horizon	Deliverables	Timeframe			Additional Notes
						Annual Ongoing			
						Short (Yr. 1-4)	Med (Yr. 4-7)	Long (Yr. 7-10)	
Goal 1 Strengthen Partnerships with First Nation Governments, other Governments, Landowners and Non-Profit Agencies									
1.1	Continue to establish and manage land use agreements with private and public agencies for recreational and conservation purposes.	RDN parks staff	Regional/ community	RDN staff	New and ongoing agreements are maintained by existing staff to ensure parkland tenures continue successfully into the future.				
1.2	Identify and foster partnerships with First Nations and non-profit organizations to acquire and manage conservation and recreation lands.	RDN parks staff, various non-profit organizations	Regional/ community	RDN staff	Managing agreements with community groups and non-profit organizations interested in partnering with the RDN on long-term, ongoing parkland related projects are managed by existing RDN staff.				
Goal 2 Collaborate with First Nations on Park Planning and Design									
2.1	In collaboration with First Nations, explore opportunities to incorporate cultural education and interpretation into park design and development.	RDN staff + First Nations	Regional/ community	\$250,000	Framework and process for when and how to integrate cultural First Nations information into RDN Parks. Establish regional and electoral area specific First Nations capacity funds to support working and collaborating with local First Nations.				\$25,000/year
2.2	In collaboration with First Nations, explore opportunities to protect important cultural and natural areas.	RDN staff + First Nations + consultant	Regional/ community	\$50,000	Identify parks with high archeological potential in the RDN and provide recommendations for their protection.				


Action	Description	Responsibility	Service (Regional/ Community)	Implementation budget over 10-year horizon	Deliverables	Timeframe			Additional Notes
						Annual Ongoing			
						Short (Yr. 1-4)	Med (Yr. 4-7)	Long (Yr. 7-10)	

### Goal 3 Identify and Preserve Important Natural Areas through Parkland Acquisition






3.1	Develop a regional parks acquisition strategy to guide parkland acquisition for conservation and recreation purposes.	RDN parks and mapping staff + local non-profit organizations, First Nations, municipal partners + consultant	Regional	\$200,000	Develop an acquisition strategy to understand the region's natural assets and acquisition goals. Identify and map areas with high biodiversity values, revise and update the regional park acquisition criteria and rating framework, prioritize areas for parkland acquisition and develop a sustainable funding model.				
3.2	Reassess the Regional Park Classification System.	RDN parks staff	Regional	RDN staff	Updated classifications of existing regional parks and the creation of a new class for undeveloped properties (designated as regional park but not to be developed or improved until a future time).				

### Goal 4 Protect and Enhance Natural Parkland Areas through Management and Restoration

4.1	Update park management plans and prioritize key action items related to sensitive ecosystem preservation.	RDN parks staff + consultant	Regional	\$750,000	Status update of action items in regional park management plans and prioritization of actions that support natural habitat preservation in the financial plan (RDN staff). Renewal of regional park management plans, including public engagement and implementation plans (consultant).				Annual budget assumes consultant fee for one regional park management plan renewal process /year at approx. \$75,000/update.
4.2	Develop and implement an invasive species strategy to rehabilitate, maintain and enhance natural ecosystems and biodiversity in parks.	RDN parks staff + consultant	Regional/ community	\$50,000	Report with maps and action plan to tackle priority invasive species in RDN parks.				\$50,000 for external consultants

Action	Description	Responsibility	Service (Regional/ Community)	Implementation budget over 10-year horizon	Deliverables	Timeframe			Additional Notes
						Annual Ongoing			
						Short (Yr. 1-4)	Med (Yr. 4-7)	Long (Yr. 7-10)	
4.3	Develop a wildfire and risk assessment strategy to mitigate fire risk in regional and community parks.	RDN parks staff + consultant	Regional/ community	\$50,000	Report and action plan that outlines steps to mitigate fire risks in RDN parks.				

#### Goal 5 Provide Parks and Trails with Well-Maintained and Diverse Amenities

5.1	Complete parks and trails master plans for each electoral area.	RDN parks and planning staff + consultant	Community	\$525,000	Map-based plan of existing and proposed community parks and trails for each electoral area that is based on community engagement. Includes implementation plans.				Budget assumes consultant fee for one master plan @ \$75,000 per plan, with 7 plans in total.
5.2	Identify, develop, and promote specific areas in the parks system where access for all ages and abilities is available.	RDN staff + consultant	Regional/ community	\$50,000	Assessment of regional and community parks and trails to identify existing and potential improvements of accessible amenities including an implementation plan.				\$50,000 for external consultants
		RDN staff + consultant	Regional/ community	\$15,000	Update Parks and Trails Finder, communicate on park maps, and develop promotional materials.				
5.3	Ensure operating funds are sufficient to deliver a well-maintained park system that meets public use levels.	RDN staff	Regional/ community	\$300,000	Expand Parks Operations capacity and equipment to maintain existing and newly developed parks.				Budget assumes a new park operation staff every 3 years. Additional staff due to park acquisition and development may be required and will need to be evaluated annually.

Action	Description	Responsibility	Service (Regional/ Community)	Implementation budget over 10-year horizon	Deliverables	Timeframe			Additional Notes
						Annual Ongoing			
						Short (Yr. 1-4)	Med (Yr. 4-7)	Long (Yr. 7-10)	
5.4	Support the RDN’s development of an asset management system to inform short and long-term budget planning for park asset maintenance and renewal.	RDN parks staff	Regional/ community	RDN staff	Comprehensive inclusion of park amenities within the organization’s asset management system.				
Goal 6 Enhance and Develop Trail Connections									
6.1	Evaluate and update the proposed Regional Trail Network to reaffirm regional trail priorities.	RDN parks staff, local non-profit organizations, First Nations, municipal partners + consultant	Regional	\$80,000	Stakeholder engagement to review the Regional Trail concept and evaluate and update regional trail priorities.				
6.2	Review the implementation of regional active transportation planning initiatives and determine approach.	RDN staff + consultant	Regional/ community	To be determined	Explore new funding mechanisms for implementing active transportation initiatives in collaboration with electoral area Active Transportation Plans (e.g. via a tax increase for an existing function such as Parks, or a new local service area active transportation tax).				Electoral Area master plans will inform active transportation projects (see 5.1).
Goal 7 Increase Volunteering, Learning and Programming Opportunities within the Parks and Trails System									
7.1	Develop and implement a park and trail volunteer program to coordinate and support volunteer-led stewardship projects.	RDN parks staff	Regional/ community	\$600,000	Create part time staff position to coordinate and support volunteerism and volunteer projects within parks.				Annual cost for new position: \$60,000
7.2	Enhance the ability to offer programming and educational opportunities by identifying and developing additional infrastructure at key parks.	RDN parks and recreation staff + consultant	Regional/ community	\$20,000	Assessment of amenity gaps for program delivery in community and regional parks and trails and prioritize improvement projects into financial plans for community and regional parks.				
Total over 10-year Horizon				\$2,940,000					

Tables 19 to 22 categorize the actions into annual ongoing, short-term, medium-term and long-term timeframes and provide further detail into budget implications for regional and community parks and trails.

**Table 19. ANNUAL ONGOING ACTIONS - Regional and Community Parks and Trails Budget Implications**

Annual Ongoing Actions					
Action	Description	Annual Ongoing Costs	Regional Parks and Trails Funding Allocation (annual)	Community Parks and Trails Funding (total annual for all electoral areas)	Community Parks and Trails Funding Allocation (annual % per electoral area)
1.1	Continue to establish and manage land use agreements with private and public agencies for recreational and conservation purposes.	N/A (Position is funded)	N/A	N/A	N/A
1.2	Identify and foster partnerships with First Nations and non-profit organizations to acquire and manage conservation and recreation lands.	N/A (Position is funded)	N/A	N/A	N/A
2.1	In collaboration with First Nations, explore opportunities to incorporate cultural education and interpretation into park design and development.	\$25,000	50% (\$12,500)	50% (\$12,500)	7% (\$1,785)
5.3	Assess current maintenance requirements to ensure operating funds are sufficient to deliver a well-maintained park system that meets public use levels.	\$30,000	50% (\$15,000)	50% (\$15,000)	7% (\$2,145)
7.1	Develop and implement a park and trail volunteer program to coordinate and support volunteer-led stewardship projects.	\$60,000	50% (\$30,000)	50% (\$30,000)	7% (\$4,285)
Annual Ongoing Project Costs		\$115,000/yr	Regional \$57,500/yr	Community (All Electoral Areas) \$57,500/yr	Community (Per Electoral Area) \$8,215/yr
Total Cost for 10 Year Period for Ongoing Actions		\$1,150,000	\$575,000	\$575,000	\$82,150

**Table 20.** SHORT-TERM ACTIONS - Regional and Community Parks and Trails Budget Implications

Short-Term (Begin Within 1–4 years)					
Action		Anticipated Project Budget	Regional Parks and Trails Funding Allocation (%)	Community Parks and Trails Funding Allocation (%)	Community Parks and Trails Funding Per Electoral Area (\$)
2.2	In collaboration with First Nations, explore opportunities to protect important cultural and natural areas.	\$50,000	50% (\$25,000)	50% (\$25,000)	\$3,570
3.1	Develop a regional parks acquisition strategy to guide parkland acquisition for conservation and recreation purposes.	\$200,000	100%	N/A	N/A
3.2	Reassess the Regional Park Classification System.	RDN staff	100%		N/A
4.1	Update park management plans and prioritize key action items related to sensitive ecosystem preservation (1 per year @ \$75,000 per plan)	\$300,000	100%	N/A	N/A
4.2	Develop an invasive species strategy to rehabilitate, maintain and enhance natural ecosystems and biodiversity in parks.	\$50,000	50% (\$25,000)	50% (\$25,000)	\$3,570
4.3	Develop a wildfire and risk assessment strategy to mitigate fire risk in regional and community parks.	\$50,000	50% (\$25,000)	50% (\$25,000)	\$3,570
5.1	Complete parks and trails master plans for each electoral area. Proposed Electoral Areas: B, G	\$150,000	N/A	100% (\$150,000)	\$75,000 per plan (B and G)
Short-Term Project Costs (total):		\$800,000	\$575,000	\$225,000	\$10,710 (EA A, C, E, F, H) \$85,710 (EA B and G)

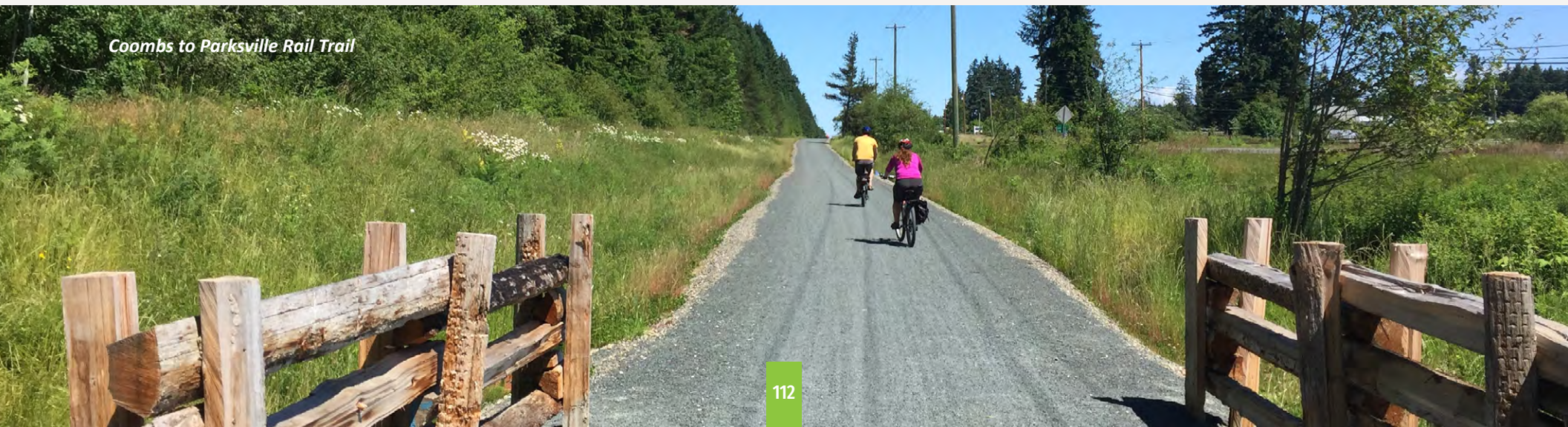
**Table 21.** MEDIUM-TERM ACTIONS - Regional and Community Parks and Trails Budget Implications

Medium-Term Actions (Begin Within 4–7 Years)					
Action		Anticipated Project Budget	Regional Parks and Trails Funding Allocation	Community Parks and Trails Funding Allocation (%)	Community Parks and Trails Funding Allocation (Per Electoral Area)
4.1	Update park management plans and prioritize key action items related to sensitive ecosystem preservation (1 per year @ \$75,000 per plan)	\$225,000	100%	N/A	N/A
5.1	Complete parks and trails master plans for each electoral area. Proposed Electoral Areas: E, C	\$150,000	N/A	\$150,000	\$75,000 (EA E, C)
5.2	Identify, develop, and promote specific areas in the parks system where access for all ages and abilities is available.	\$50,000 (Assessment) \$15,000 (Communications and promotional materials)	60% (\$39,000)	40% (\$26,000)	\$3,715
6.1	Evaluate and update the proposed Regional Trail Network to reaffirm regional trail priorities.	\$80,000	100%	N/A	N/A
6.2	Review the implementation of regional active transportation planning initiatives and determine approach.	TBD	50%	50%	7%
Medium-Term Project Costs (total):		\$520,000	\$344,000	\$176,000	\$3,715 (EA A, B, G, F, H) \$78,715 (EA E and C)

**Table 22.** LONG-TERM ACTIONS - Regional and Community Parks and Trails Budget Implications

Long-Term Actions (Begin Within 7–10 Years)					
Action		Anticipated Project Budget	Regional Parks and Trails Funding Allocation	Community Parks and Trails Funding Allocation (%)	Community Parks and Trails Funding Allocation (Per Electoral Area)
4.1	Update park management plans and prioritize key action items related to sensitive ecosystem preservation (1 per year @ \$75,000 per plan)	\$225,000	100%	N/A	N/A
5.1	Complete parks and trails master plans for each electoral area. Proposed Electoral Areas: A, F, H	\$225,000	N/A	100%	\$75,000 (EA A, F, H)
5.4	Support the RDN's development of an asset management system to inform short and long-term budget planning for park asset maintenance and renewal.	RDN staff	60%	40%	5.7%
7.2	Enhance the ability to offer programming and educational opportunities by identifying and developing additional infrastructure at key parks.	\$20,000	50%	50%	7% (\$1,430)
Long-Term Project Costs (total):		\$470,000	\$235,000	\$235,000	\$76,430 (EA A, F, H) \$1,430 (EA B, C, E, G)

*Coombs to Parksville Rail Trail*





# 7 CONCLUSION

**Content**

► Closing Remarks

# CLOSING REMARKS

This strategy provides a new framework and direction for expanding, developing and managing regional and community parks and trails over the next ten years.

The goals and actions presented in the strategy reflect the community's key values and priorities. They highlight the importance of collaboration and partnerships and prioritize the acquisition and protection of important natural areas, building a connected system of parks and trails for conservation and recreation purposes and increasing opportunities for people to recreate and connect with nature.

By implementing the actions proposed by the strategy, the regional district can continue to evolve and expand its parks services to support and inspire a growing population with increased public demand for parks, trails, and natural areas.





# APPENDICES



# APPENDICES

## **Appendix A – Round 1 Engagement Documents**

RDN Parks and Trails Strategy - Round 1 Engagement Summary

## **Appendix B – Round 2 Engagement Documents**

RDN Parks and Trails Strategy - Round 2 Engagement Summary

## **Appendix C – Electoral Area Maps**

Electoral Area A Community Parks

Electoral Area B Community Parks

Electoral Area C Community Parks

Electoral Area E Community Parks

Electoral Area F Community Parks

Electoral Area G Community Parks

Electoral Area H Community Parks

## **Appendix D**

RDN Regional Park Acquisition Criteria & Rating Framework (2009)

## **Appendix E**

Community Parkland Acquisition Criteria, excerpt from RDN Community Parks & Trails Strategic Plan, Electoral Areas E, F, G and H (2014), pages 53-60





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