

**REPORT TO REGIONAL PARKS COMMITTEE
MEETING OF WEDNESDAY, APRIL 23, 2025**

SUBJECT 2024 Regional Parks & Trails Strategic Plan Progress Report

ISSUE SUMMARY

To present the Capital Regional District's (CRD) 2024 Regional Parks and Trails Strategic Plan Progress Report, which identifies progress toward the CRD's Regional Parks and Trails Strategic Plan 2022-2032.

BACKGROUND

The Regional Parks and Trails Strategic Plan 2022-2032, approved by the CRD Board in July 2023, establishes a decade-long framework for guiding actions within regional parks and trails. These actions shape annual service and work plans, which are tied to the financial planning process and approved by the Board. To ensure transparency and accountability, the CRD commits to annual reporting through the Regional Parks and Trails Strategic Plan Progress Report.

The 2024 Progress Report provides a detailed review of accomplishments and challenges between January and December 2024. It highlights progress across five goal areas, which collectively align with 13 strategic priorities and 57 supporting actions. A comprehensive report card in Appendix A summarizes metrics self-reported by the service areas responsible for implementing these actions.

The five goal areas of the Strategic Plan are:

1. Reconciliation: Fostering partnerships and shared stewardship with Indigenous communities.
2. Conservation: Protecting natural ecosystems and biodiversity within parks and trails.
3. Visitor Experience: Enhancing park amenities and recreational opportunities for the public.
4. Climate Action & Resiliency: Addressing environmental challenges and building sustainable infrastructure.
5. Access & Equity: Ensuring parks and trails are inclusive and accessible to all members of the community.

Progress Summary

Staff assigned a 'status' to each goal area and related priorities. Statuses are determined using these descriptions:

- On track: 75%-100% of the yearly target was progressed as envisioned.
- Opportunity for improvement: 50%-75% of the yearly target was progressed as envisioned.
- Attention required: <50% of the yearly target was progressed as envisioned.

The progress of each goal in the Strategic Plan is as follows:

Reconciliation (On Track – achieved 75% or greater of yearly target)

- First Nations maintained active involvement and engagement in various projects, both operational and in planning stages.
- Collaborations included:
 - A traditional use agreement and reconciliation workplan for Mount Work Regional Park.
 - Engagement on the updated Regional Parks Land Acquisition Strategy.
 - Participation in restoration and construction efforts as cultural monitors and advisor.

Conservation (On Track – achieved 75% or greater of yearly target)

- Significant initiatives included inventorying, monitoring, restoring and enhancing habitats for species at risk.
- Actions taken addressed threats to plant species at risk in multiple regional parks.
- Staff supported mitigation efforts for animal species such as western painted turtles, sharp-tailed snakes and blue-grey tail dropper slugs.
- The completion of the State of Natural Features Report that compiled available data and provided a preliminary assessment of the ecological health of regional parks and trails.

Visitor Experience (On Track – achieved 75% or greater of yearly target)

- A region-wide survey revealing a 79% visitor satisfaction rate.
- Contributions from 711 volunteers (+46 from 2023) totaling over 6,600 hours (+840 from 2023).
- Enhancements to recreation through trail restoration, re-routing and infrastructure upgrades.
- The completion of the State of Outdoor Recreation Report that compiled available data on the current state of outdoor recreation for the CRD's regional parks and trails.

Climate Action & Resiliency (On Track – achieved 75% or greater of yearly target)

- Renewal projects for active transportation assets (e.g., paving and infrastructure assessments on regional trails).
- Launch of a new regional trail on Mayne Island connecting the ferry terminal at Village Bay to the commercial centre at Miners Bay.
- Secured provincial grant funding for regional trail expansion and enhancement.
- Increase in greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and energy consumption with increase in staff and vehicles.
- Six electric vehicles added to Regional Parks fleet.

Access & Equity (On Track – achieved 75% or greater of yearly target)

- Annual accessibility audit introduced to ensure ongoing assessment and improvement.
- Park webpages provide detailed accessibility information added to five park webpages.
- Parking upgraded to add accessible parking stalls at 11 regional parks and trail parking lots.
- Power To Be collaboration provided accessible public nature programs and events.

Challenges and Opportunities

Implementation of the goals and strategies in the Strategic Plan can be impacted by system

growth and the public's expectations of the regional parks service.

Challenges that arose in 2024 include:

- Resident surveys revealed a decline in satisfaction with the CRD park system compared to 2017. This trend may be tied to a significant rise in visitation levels, resulting in busier parks and potentially less enjoyable experiences for visitors. Alternatively, the decreasing satisfaction levels might indicate that the types of outdoor experiences sought by the region's growing population are not being delivered at the same quality as in previous years. This highlights a need to assess park services and adapt to evolving community preferences and demands.
- Regional park operations have experienced an increase in GHG emissions and energy consumption, largely attributed to a growing workforce, with 24 additional staff members joining since 2023. This trend emphasizes the need for a new benchmark to be established for GHG emissions and energy use, enabling the division to effectively measure and manage these levels on a year-to-year basis. Implementing such a benchmark will be key in aligning operational growth with climate action goals.

CONCLUSION

The Capital Regional District's (CRD) Regional Parks and Trails Strategic Plan 2022-2032 guides the CRD towards its desired vision for regional parks and regional trails. The Strategic Plan establishes five goal areas where the CRD focuses its efforts. Each of these goals includes strategic priorities with supporting actions and timelines for implementation. Overall, there are 13 strategic priorities and 57 supporting actions.

In 2024, the CRD made progress in multiple goal areas of the Strategic Plan and the overall status was identified as 'on track' (75-100% of yearly targets met). The CRD remains committed to working closely with First Nations' communities, other orders of government, organizations, institutions and residents in the region to reach the desired vision of the Strategic Plan over the next eight years.

RECOMMENDATION

There is no recommendation. This report is for information only.

Submitted by:	Mike MacIntyre, Senior Manager, Regional Parks
Concurrence:	Luisa Jones, MBA, General Manager, Parks, Recreation & Environmental Services
Concurrence:	Ted Robbins, B. Sc., C. Tech., Chief Administrative Officer

ATTACHMENT

Appendix A: 2024 Regional Parks and Trails Strategic Plan Progress Report