



Making a difference...together

## REPORT TO REGIONAL PARKS COMMITTEE MEETING OF WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 23, 2024

---

**SUBJECT** Mountain Forest Regional Park – Interim Management Guidelines

### **ISSUE SUMMARY**

Capital Regional District (CRD) staff are seeking approval to implement the Mountain Forest Regional Park Interim Management Guidelines (IMG). The purpose of the IMG is to guide the operation of the Mountain Forest Regional Park property (the property) prior to a park management plan being in place.

### **BACKGROUND**

The CRD and the Habitat Acquisition Trust (HAT) partnered to purchase the 19.86-hectare (49-acre) property on November 29, 2021. This acquisition was primarily funded by the CRD, with additional support from HAT and a donation by the former long-term landowner through Canada's Ecological Gifts Program. A conservation covenant, registered in favour of HAT, requires that the CRD manage the property to protect its unique ecological features, as outlined in a Baseline Documentation Report. Additionally, under the Ecological Gifts Program, the CRD is responsible for preserving the property's biodiversity and environmental heritage in perpetuity.

In time, CRD staff will initiate the development of a park management plan for the property. This process will involve engagement with First Nations, stakeholders and the public to establish a 10-year vision for the park and outline the management actions needed to achieve it. Prior to a new management plan being in place, direction is needed to guide the interim management of the property. Staff developed the IMG (Appendix A), which prioritizes building relationships and gathering information needed to better understand the property's ecological, recreational and cultural values and inform the eventual development of a park management plan. The IMG further guides the securement of the property and establishes how it is to be utilized on an interim basis. Once a park management plan is developed and approved by the CRD Board, the IMG will no longer be used to manage the property.

### **ALTERNATIVES**

#### *Alternative 1*

The Regional Parks Committee recommends to the Capital Regional District Board:  
That the Mountain Forest Regional Park Interim Management Guidelines be adopted.

#### *Alternative 2*

That the Mountain Forest Regional Park Interim Management Guidelines be referred back to staff with direction for revision.

### **IMPLICATIONS**

#### *Alignment with Existing Plans & Strategies*

The IMG broadly supports the five priority areas within the Regional Parks and Trails Strategic Plan (Strategic Plan), approved by the CRD Board on July 12, 2023. It provides guidance to establish collaborative working relationships with First Nations to continue the CRD's

reconciliatory action. It further guides gathering information needed to inform conservation, visitor experience, climate action and resiliency, and access and equity-related park management actions that could be implemented through a future park management plan.

### *Environmental & Climate Action*

As outlined within a Baseline Documentation Report that was prepared during its acquisition, the property contains arbutus, Douglas-fir and Garry oak woodlands that are among Canada's most sensitive and biologically diverse ecosystems. It further contains habitat for several species at risk, though further research is needed to verify which species are present. The IMG includes interim management actions that support ongoing and future research and conservation initiatives aimed at better understanding and protecting the property's unique natural values. It further includes actions that support planning for climate change mitigation and adaptation measures, which could be implemented through a future park management plan.

### *First Nations Implications*

The new Strategic Plan provides direction for CRD staff to involve First Nations in land acquisition and park management planning (Reconciliation Action 1-1a). As the property was acquired prior to the Strategic Plan being in place, First Nations involvement in the acquisition was limited. Six First Nations governments have since been identified as having asserted territory over the property. CRD staff recently forwarded a draft copy of the IMG to these Nations for information and committed to working with them to identify and pursue opportunities that respect and support their rights and self-determination. CRD staff intend to collaborate with interested Nations to establish a name for the park, replacing the temporary designation of Mountain Forest Regional Park (also known as Mountain Road Forest) assigned during its acquisition.

### *Equity, Diversity & Inclusion*

The IMG includes an interim management action that supports the identification of barriers to access and equity within the property that could be addressed through a future park management plan.

### *Financial Implications*

Implementation of the IMG will be included in the CRD's regular annual budgeting process.

### *Service Delivery Implications*

Prior to acquisition, the property served as a valuable greenspace and enhanced connectivity for the surrounding neighbourhood. Since the acquisition, CRD staff have begun repairing and improving sections of existing trails to ensure they are safe for public use and minimize impacts to the natural environment. Current public uses are primarily dog walking, hiking and running, as well as cycling and horseback riding on select trails. CRD staff recommend maintaining most of the existing trails as hiking trails and maintaining the northernmost trail connecting Mountain Road and Excelsior Road as a mixed-use hiking/cycling/equestrian trail to maintain connectivity for existing user groups while mitigating impacts to ecologically sensitive areas.

### *Social Implications*

Implementing the IMG communicates to the public how the CRD intends to manage the property and what recreation opportunities are available while it's in place. The IMG includes flexibility to

adapt management activities based on public feedback and new information while the CRD continues to learn more about the property.

**CONCLUSION**

Capital Regional District (CRD) staff are seeking approval to implement the Mountain Road Forest Interim Management Guidelines (IMG) to guide the operation of the property prior to a park management plan being in place. The IMG supports Strategic Plan direction and prioritizes building relationships and gathering information needed to inform the development of a park management plan. It further guides the securement of the property and how it is to be utilized on an interim basis. Once a park management plan is developed and approved by the CRD Board, the IMG will no longer be used to manage the property.

**RECOMMENDATION**

The Regional Parks Committee recommends to the Capital Regional District Board:  
That the Mountain Road Forest Interim Management Guidelines be adopted.

Submitted by:	Mike MacIntyre, Senior Manager, Regional Parks
Concurrence:	Glenn Harris, Ph.D., R.P.Bio., Acting General Manager, Parks, Recreation & Environmental Services
Concurrence:	Ted Robbins, B. Sc., C. Tech., Chief Administrative Officer

**ATTACHMENT**

Appendix A: Mountain Forest Regional Park – Interim Management Guidelines