

**REPORT TO REGIONAL PARKS COMMITTEE
MEETING OF WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 23, 2022**

SUBJECT Conservation Strategy Framework Review

ISSUE SUMMARY

This report provides an information update in response to a motion arising on the advisability of adopting the 2010 conservation strategy framework on an interim basis, pending a more fulsome update.

BACKGROUND

At the October 27, 2021 Regional Parks Committee meeting, staff provided an information update on the ecological values in regional parks and current management of those parks with regard to conservation. The report also provided historical context for the development of the *Framework for the Conservation Strategy for Capital Regional District – Regional Parks: Providing strategic direction for parkland management*. This conservation strategy framework was first brought to the Regional Parks Committee for decision in March 2010, and again in September 2010. During those 2010 meetings, the framework was referred back to staff for further editing.

Updates have not been made to the 2010 draft conservation strategy framework.

At the October 2021 Committee meeting, the following motion arising was introduced and carried:

That the matter be referred to staff to report back to the Committee by January 2022 on the advisability of adopting the conservation strategy on an interim basis pending the updating of that strategy.

Following this motion, staff have conducted a thorough review of the 2010 conservation strategy framework and provided the following recommendation based on their findings.

ALTERNATIVES

Alternative 1

The Regional Parks Committee recommends to the Capital Regional District Board:
That the *2010 Framework for the Conservation Strategy for Capital Regional District – Regional Parks: Providing strategic direction for parkland management* not be adopted on an interim basis, and a new conservation plan be developed by staff for Board decision following the strategic plan update.

Alternative 2

That this report be referred back to staff for additional information.

IMPLICATIONS

Environmental & Climate Implications

The 2010 conservation strategy framework supporting data, tools and approach are now more than ten years out of date. The regional parks system has grown and diversified the types of ecosystems and species protected in those parks. There are also new and increasing pressures on the park system, which is not fully represented in the framework. The framework also takes a more reactionary approach to mitigating identified threats or stressors on the ecological values within the park system, rather than identifying opportunities for proactive conservation planning. The framework does not appropriately respond to the actions identified within the Capital Regional District's (CRD) Climate Action Strategy to support the five-year action plan, including climate-focused decision making and resilient and abundant nature, ecosystems and food systems.

Adopting the 2010 conservation strategy framework would implement out-of-date conservation practices and approaches that are no longer relevant. In some areas, staff are currently operating beyond the scope of that framework and are using more current data, tools and approaches to inform decision-making and conservation planning.

Intergovernmental Implications

The framework does not appropriately acknowledge the importance and role of collaborative partnerships with First Nations, local government and community. More specifically, it does not reflect the CRD's commitment to reconciliation, summarized in the CRD's Statement of Reconciliation.

Alignment with Board & Corporate Priorities

The framework is not aligned with current Board priorities (2019-2022), including the CRD's commitment to climate change and environmental stewardship, as well as reconciliation with First Nations. A new plan would align with existing CRD plans, strategies and priorities and would be timed to appropriately reflect the updated CRD Regional Parks Strategic Plan, once completed.

Financial Implications

The additional resources provided to regional parks to support the conservation program through the 2022 budget are sufficient to enable the development of a new conservation plan.

Service Delivery Implications

To date, staff have led priority conservation actions within regional parks without a conservation strategy or plan. While a plan is important in providing clear direction and guide priorities and strategic management actions, staff can continue to conduct work following current board priorities, industry best practices, and direction in the existing CRD Regional Parks Strategic Plan, management plans and current conservation tools, until a new plan is developed and adopted.

CONCLUSION

The 2010 conservation strategy framework no longer reflects up-to-date data, planning tools and best practices in conservation. It does not appropriately respond to the current needs, priorities and pressures on the park system, which have significantly changed since 2010. The framework is not aligned with current Board priorities, specifically the CRD's current commitment to First Nations reconciliation and climate change mitigation measures. Staff will continue to utilize existing best practices and other operational conservation tools until a new conservation plan is in place.

RECOMMENDATION

The Regional Parks Committee recommends to the Capital Regional District Board:
That the *2010 Framework for the Conservation Strategy for Capital Regional District – Regional Parks: Providing strategic direction for parkland management* not be adopted on an interim basis, and a new conservation plan be developed by staff for Board decision following the strategic plan update.

Submitted by:	Jeff Leahy, RPF, Senior Manager, Regional Parks
Concurrence:	Larisa Hutcheson, P.Eng., General Manager, Parks & Environmental Services
Concurrence:	Robert Lapham, MCIP, RPP, Chief Administrative Officer

ATTACHMENT

Appendix A: Framework for the Conservation Strategy for Capital Regional District – Regional Parks: Providing strategic direction for parkland stewardship (March 17, 2010)