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REPORT TO REGIONAL PARKS COMMITTEE MEETING OF WEDNESDAY, JUNE 28, 2023

SUBJECT **Island View Beach Regional Park Campground – Operating Season Extension Pilot Project**

ISSUE SUMMARY

Capital Regional District (CRD) staff are seeking approval to undertake an operating season extension pilot project at Island View Beach Regional Park campground.

BACKGROUND

On February 10, 2023, the CRD submitted a temporary use permit renewal application to the District of Central Saanich to allow the operation of the Island View Beach Regional Park (IVBRP) campground for an additional three years. The campground consists of 18 recreational vehicle (RV) sites, 5 small trailer sites and 24 tent sites (Appendix A). The application was approved on May 24, 2023.

During the application review process, Central Saanich Council expressed interest in having the CRD extend the camping season on a trial basis. CRD staff agreed to explore the extension of the 2023 camping season and brought it to the attention of the Regional Parks Committee at its May 24, 2023 meeting. The Regional Parks Committee subsequently carried the following motion arising:

That staff report at the July Capital Regional District Board meeting on adding a pilot to extend the IVB camping season beyond the current end of season on Labour Day.

Typically, the CRD operates the campground from the beginning of the Victoria Day long weekend in May until the end of the Labour Day long weekend in September. For the 2023 season, this would be from May 20 to September 4. CRD staff are proposing to extend the camping season by 35 days, until the end of the Thanksgiving long weekend on October 9, approximately one month longer than the typical season.

ALTERNATIVES

Alternative 1

The Regional Parks Committee recommends to the Capital Regional District Board:

1. That the 2023 operating season for the Island View Beach Regional Park Campground be extended to the end of the Thanksgiving long weekend, October 9, 2023, as a pilot project; and
2. That CRD staff review the success of the pilot project and report back to the Regional Parks Committee and Board in early 2024.

Alternative 2

That the operating season for the Island View Beach Regional Park Campground be maintained as present, from the beginning of the Victoria Day long weekend in May until the end of the Labour Day long weekend in September.

IMPLICATIONS

Intergovernmental Implications

Recognizing shared interest in the land, the CRD has partnered with the District of Central Saanich and Tsawout First Nation to pursue some aspects of managing IVBRP, such as mosquito abatement. Central Saanich Council has expressed interest in collaborating with the CRD and consulting with the Tsawout First Nation to extend the camping season. CRD staff will be discussing the camping season extension with staff from Tsawout First Nation and the District of Central Saanich at the next IVB working group meeting.

Social Implications

The CRD owns three frontcountry campgrounds in the region: the Jordan River Regional Park campground, which operates year-round by first come, first served self-registration; the Spring Salmon Place (KWL-UCHUN) campground, which is operated seasonally on a first come, first served basis by the T'Sou-ke First Nation; and the Island View Beach Regional Park campground, which operates seasonally on a reservation system. Other public and private frontcountry campgrounds exist in the region, including the nearby SMONEĆTEN campground in North Saanich, which is operated by Parks Canada from May 15 to September 30, annually.

Island View Beach Regional Park offers a uniquely picturesque setting on the east coast of the Saanich Peninsula, which attracts many visitors from across the region and beyond. Extending the camping season at IVBRP will offer a greater diversity of frontcountry camping options to the public through the early fall, while the weather remains relatively mild. Due to change of season and that many children and young adults return to school in early September, it is anticipated that the number of occupied sites at the campground will decrease during the extended camping period. Bookings are anticipated to be primarily on weekends, with the RV and tent trailer sites receiving the highest occupancy rates.

Financial Implications

Camping at IVBRP is a subsidized recreational activity. For the 2022 season, the camping fees were \$15/night for the 29 inland tent and tent trailer sites, and \$20/night for the 18 beachfront RV sites. The net revenue collected from camping fees was approximately \$79,000 and the cost for staffing and facility maintenance was approximately \$94,000, resulting in a net operating cost of approximately \$15,000.

Based on the total number of sites available and prescribed fees, the maximum revenue for the 2022 operating season was \$795/day with 100% occupancy. As shown in Table 1, a peak revenue of \$784/day was earned during the month of August, when occupancy was estimated to be near 100%. A low revenue of \$430/day was earned during the month of September, when occupancy was estimated to be near 50%.

Table 1: Island View Beach Regional Park Campground – 2022 Net Revenue

Month	Operating Days	Fee Revenue	Avg \$ / Day	Occupancy Rate (est.)
May	12	\$8,689.73	\$724.14	91%
June	30	\$21,011.43	\$700.38	88%
July	31	\$23,407.01	\$755.06	95%
August	31	\$24,316.53	\$784.40	99%
September	4	\$1,719.46	\$429.86	54%
Total	108	\$79,144.16	\$678.77	85%

For the 2023 operating season, camping fees have been raised and standardized to \$25/night, plus \$10 per additional vehicle, for all 47 sites. Discounting additional vehicle fee revenue, the maximum camping fee revenue for the 2023 season is \$1,175/day.

As shown in Table 2, staff estimate that an additional cost of approximately \$20,000 for staff and facility maintenance would be incurred to operate the campground over the 35-day extension period. Based on information provided by Parks Canada on the September occupancy rates at the nearby SMONEĆTEN campground, occupancy is estimated to remain near 50% over the extension period, generating an estimated fee revenue of approximately \$20,000, or \$570/day. This will result in an estimated no net profit/loss over the extension period.

Table 2: Island View Beach Regional Park Campground – Estimated 2023 Extension Period Cost and Revenue

Operating Days	Fee Revenue (+GST)	Revenue / Operating Days	Cost for Staff + Maintenance	Total Operating Cost / Profit	Occupancy
35	\$20,000	\$570.00	\$20,000	\$0.00	50%

Service Delivery Implications

Managing the campground over the extension period will require a full-time park maintenance worker to take on additional workload. Additionally, two seasonal park maintenance worker contracts will need to be extended, as their positions are only currently funded until the Labour Day weekend.

Alignment with Existing Plans & Strategies

The CRD began operating the campground in 2010. The CRD did not own the land on which the existing campground is located when the Island View Beach Regional Park Management Plan Bylaw No. 1, 1989 was approved in 1989, nor when it was amended in 1996 and 1997. An update to the management plan was initiated in 2015 but abandoned due to a need to reevaluate the planning process used, particularly regarding First Nations consultation. Subsequently, there is no specific management direction for the campground at present.

The Regional Parks and Trails Strategic Plan 2022-2032, which received interim approval by the Board on July 13, 2022, does not include management direction for the campground but does include the following Reconciliation Priority Action:

- 1-2d *Support business relations with First Nations that provide value-added and compatible services in regional parks and regional trails, such as campground operations.*

Additionally, the Strategic Plan contains the following Visitor Experience Strategic Priority, which provides high-level support for the operation of the campground:

- Priority 3-1 *Offer compatible outdoor recreation experiences that are enjoyable, healthy, safe and immersed in nature.*

It is anticipated that the forthcoming development of the Outdoor Recreation Plan (Strategic Plan priority action 3-1a) will provide a better understanding of frontcountry camping demand in the region.

CONCLUSION

The Regional Parks Committee carried motions arising at the May 24, 2023, Regional Parks Committee meeting, directing staff to explore extending the Island View Beach Regional Park campground operating season beyond the Labour Day long weekend as a pilot project. Staff determined that while there would likely be decreased visitation in the early fall, there may be public interest in having additional outdoor recreation opportunities within the region. Furthermore, operating costs and fee revenue are estimated to be equal over the extension period, resulting in no net profit/cost. Staff recommend that the 2023 IVB camping season be extended by 35 days and that at the end of the operating season, staff conduct a review of visitation rates, fee revenue and cost to operate the campground over the extension period and report back to the Regional Parks Committee and Board in early 2024.

RECOMMENDATION

The Regional Parks Committee recommends to the Capital Regional District Board:

1. That the 2023 operating season for the Island View Beach Regional Park Campground be extended to the end of the Thanksgiving long weekend, October 9, 2023, as a pilot project; and
2. That CRD staff review the success of the pilot project and report back to the Regional Parks Committee and Board in early 2024.

Submitted by:	Jeff Leahy, Senior Manager, Regional Parks
Concurrence:	Larisa Hutcheson, P.Eng., General Manager, Parks & Environmental Services
Concurrence:	Ted Robbins, B. Sc., C. Tech., Chief Administrative Officer

ATTACHMENT

Appendix A: Island View Beach Regional Park Campground – Map