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**REPORT TO REGIONAL PARKS COMMITTEE
MEETING OF WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 27, 2024**

SUBJECT **Wrigglesworth Lake Regional Park – Interim Management Guidelines**

ISSUE SUMMARY

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

BACKGROUND

The CRD purchased the 15.5-hectare (38.3-acre) property on June 8, 2022. The Juan de Fuca Electoral Area Parks and Recreation Advisory Commission supported the transfer of Wrigglesworth Lake Community Park to CRD Regional Parks in exchange for land acquisition funds to aid in the purchase of the 23.5-hectare (58.1-acre) Admiral's Forest property for use as a community park. Wrigglesworth Lake Regional Park is in the Malahat community of the Juan de Fuca Electoral Area and complements the immediately adjacent Sooke Hills Wilderness Trail (part of the Trans Canada Trail), which is owned and managed by the CRD as part of the regional parks service.

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 that vision. 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 park values in order to inform the eventual development of a park management plan. The IMG further guides the securement of the property and establishes how it will 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 Wrigglesworth Lake Regional Park Interim Management Guidelines be adopted.

Alternative 2

That the Wrigglesworth Lake 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 2022-2032 (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 the development of 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

The property is located within the Coastal Western Hemlock bio-geoclimatic zone, which covers about 11% of the CRD land base and is poorly protected across its range. About 77% (11.97 ha) of the property has been identified as containing sensitive ecosystems, such as wetland, mature forest and riparian habitat, including the presence of a large lake. This property supports diverse habitat values for many species, including large mammals such as beaver, bear and cougar, and a diversity of forest birds. Knowledge of other rare or endangered species is limited; however, the property likely supports diverse flora and fauna representative of those unique ecosystems. The property is situated within the Arbutus Creek watershed, supporting the ecological health and function of the ecosystems downstream. The IMG includes multiple actions that support ecological monitoring and conservation initiatives aimed at protecting and promoting the property's unique natural values. It further includes actions that support the development of climate change mitigation and adaptation measures that 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. Thirteen First Nations governments and Treaty Associations have been identified as having overlapping asserted Territory over the property. CRD staff will forward a draft copy of the IMG to these First Nations for information and are committed to working with them during the term of the IMG and beyond to identify opportunities that respect and support their rights and self-determination and to pursue them through the future management plan. The future management plan will make it possible to implement initiatives such as replacing the temporary designation of Wrigglesworth Lake Regional Park assigned during its acquisition, and/or incorporate Indigenous languages and site information into park signage with interested First Nations.

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 require an additional budget request, which would be included in the CRD’s regular annual budgeting process.

Service Delivery Implications

Prior to acquisition, the property served as a valuable greenspace, lake access and enhanced connectivity for the surrounding neighbourhood. Current public uses are primarily day use, picnicking, swimming, paddleboarding and dog walking. CRD staff recommend maintaining most of the existing trails as hiking trails and maintaining the open greenspace for day use and lake access.

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

CRD staff are seeking approval to implement the Wrigglesworth Lake Regional Park IMG to guide the operation of the property prior to a park management plan being in place. The IMG supports the 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 Wrigglesworth Lake Regional Park Interim Management Guidelines be adopted.

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ATTACHMENT

Appendix A: Wrigglesworth Lake Regional Park – Interim Management Guidelines