

Volunteer Services Plan

2026-2031

Capital Regional District | Parks Recreation & Environmental Services | May 27, 2026



Making a difference...together

Table of Contents

Section 1: Background.....	1
1.1 Why We Work with Volunteers	1
1.2 Strategic Alignment with CRD Direction	1
1.3 Program History	2
1.4 Working with the Union (CUPE Local 1978).....	2
1.5 Regional Parks Volunteer Program Vision & Mission.....	2
1.6 Current Volunteer Roles.....	3
Section 2: Moving Forward (2026-2031).....	4
2.1 National Trends in Volunteerism	4
2.2 Volunteers and Outdoor Recreation	4
2.3 Volunteer Satisfaction Survey Findings.....	4
2.4 Objectives (2026–2031).....	5
2.5 Workplan (2026–2031).....	6
Section 3: Key Program Considerations	10
3.1 Staff Time and Resources	10
3.2 Risk Management	10
Section 4: Adaptive Management and Measuring Success	10
Appendix A: 2023 CRD Volunteer Satisfaction Report.....	11
Appendix B: Agreement between CRD and CUPE 1978	22
References	23

Volunteer Services Plan 2026-2031

Section 1: Background

In 2003, Capital Regional District (CRD) Regional Parks completed a volunteer services plan titled *A Natural Return – Volunteers in Regional Parks and Trails*, which outlined priority actions for implementation between 2003 and 2005. This plan provided strategic direction for volunteer activities and engagement during that period.

Since then, the regional parks system has expanded to include 34 regional parks, encompassing over 13,300 hectares of parkland. As the system has grown, so has the role of volunteers.

1.1 Why We Work with Volunteers

Volunteers play a vital role in supporting the strategic vision of CRD Regional Parks—to have an expanded and connected system of regional parks and regional trails that are rich in biodiversity, respect indigenous cultural heritage and use, inspire stewardship, are resilient to change, and provide enjoyable outdoor recreation experiences. Community involvement has always been an important component of park planning and management. Volunteers enhance our capacity to restore habitat, engage with visitors, enhance recreational opportunities and foster public appreciation for the natural environment.

1.2 Strategic Alignment with CRD Direction

In addition to the original volunteer services plan, several guiding documents and surveys reinforce the importance of volunteers in the managing and protecting of regional parks.

- [Regional Parks and Trails Strategic Plan 2022-2032](#)
 - Priority 2-1: Take action to increase protection of biodiversity, ecological integrity and natural assets in the region through improved knowledge, proactive stewardship and land acquisition.
 - Priority 2-3: Work with and support partners in taking care of the region’s species, habitats and natural areas.
 - Priority 3-2: Foster stewardship through program delivery, knowledge sharing and collaboration.
- [2024 Regional Parks and Trails Resident Survey Results](#)
 - Visitors identified the following top priorities for the next five years:
 - Protecting the natural environment.
 - Repairing and maintaining existing facilities.
 - Undertaking restoration projects.
- 2023 Volunteer Satisfaction Survey Report (see Appendix A)
 - The survey provided valuable insights into who our volunteers are, what motivates them, and what they seek in a Volunteer Program. Recommendations from this report form the foundation of this updated Volunteer Services Plan.

1.3 Program History

Volunteer involvement in regional parks dates back to the CRD's inception in 1966. Community involvement in regional parks began as spontaneous acts of goodwill where individual visitors removed branches that blocked trails, picked up litter, and relayed information to staff on trail and facility conditions. The first formal volunteers in regional parks were work experience students in the late 1970s. In 1982, the program was formalized with the launch of the volunteer beekeeper and volunteer warden programs, the latter now known as the Park Steward Program.

Today, the program includes different types of volunteering that are both long-term and episodic (volunteer roles are defined on pages 5-6):

- Regular (long-term) and episodic (short-term or one-time) volunteers.
- Group volunteering.
- Stewardship group agreements.
 - Type A – these are groups that have insurance.
 - Type B – are community groups that are comprised of registered volunteers and are covered under the CRD insurance.
- Recreation group licensing.
- Student work experience.

In 2025, over 630 volunteers contributed more than 8,200 hours to regional parks.

1.4 Working with the Union (CUPE Local 1978)

An agreement between the CRD and the Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE) Local 1978 outlines the scope of volunteer roles, ensuring union jobs are protected. This partnership allows staff and volunteers to work collaboratively towards the shared goals of protecting parkland and enhancing outdoor experiences. Volunteers never displace employees but rather support and enhance their work.

In 1999, CRD and CUPE formalized a list of approved volunteer activities (see Appendix B), streamlining placement and role clarity. Since then, new roles such as volunteer trail ambassadors and EcoMonitors have been added and approved.

1.5 Regional Parks Volunteer Program Vision & Mission

Vision

The vision of volunteer services is for CRD Regional Parks to be the first choice for skilled and committed volunteers who value environmental protection and outdoor experiences. Volunteer services will be a model for other community volunteer programs and **recognized** for the partnership between staff and volunteers and the positive changes that volunteers make toward the protection of regional parks and trails.

Mission

The mission of volunteer services is to provide meaningful, diverse and innovative volunteer opportunities that reflect the interests and needs of the region. These opportunities support the mandate of CRD Regional Parks to protect the

natural environment of regional parks and trails and help regional residents remain connected with nature. CRD Regional Parks values the volunteer ethic and believes that public involvement is an essential component of our park system and our community. CRD Regional Parks recognizes that one of the best ways to achieve department goals is to strengthen and encourage volunteer participation.

1.6 Current Volunteer Roles

Regular Volunteer Positions

- **Volunteer Naturalists** operate the Nature Centre at Francis/King Regional Park on weekends and holiday Mondays and support the Elk/Beaver Lake Nature Centre during the summer months.
- **Volunteer Park Stewards** monitor regional parks, trails and facilities, reporting issues and providing information to visitors. They educate the public on park etiquette and the natural and cultural values of the regional parks. Monitoring is conducted on foot, horseback or bicycle.
- **Restoration Volunteers** participate regularly in removing invasive, non-native plant species and restoring natural habitats. In 2025, the role expanded to include growing and planting native species. This role also includes **Type B Stewardship Groups**; community members engaged in long-term (3–5 year) restoration projects within parks. These volunteers are not part of a registered society and are covered under CRD insurance.
- **EcoMonitors**, a collaborative, multi-agency program approved in 2024. EcoMonitors collect information about species in regional parks, such as purple sanicle (*Sanicula bipinnatifida*) and white-top aster (*Sericocarpus rigidus*).
- **Event Volunteers**, formalized in 2025, assist interpretive staff in hosting large public events such as Hawk Watch and Salmon Sensation.

Episodic Volunteer Positions

- **Group Volunteering** participants assist with one-time or short-term projects such as tree planting, park clean-ups, and invasive species removal. Groups may include corporate teams, schools, churches, youth organizations or counseling programs.
- **Work Experience Placements** provide individuals enrolled in recognized education or employment programs with volunteer opportunities for hands-on experience.
- **Biodiversity Heroes**, a recent interpretive program with interpretive and conservation staff leads. Participants learn about native and invasive species and conclude the session with 30-45 minutes of invasive species removal.

Other Partnerships

- **Recreation License Groups**, recreation-focused organizations that volunteer to enhance specific outdoor recreation opportunities with CRD Regional Parks as well as general conservation efforts. These groups, such as horse riding and mountain biking clubs, with signed agreements with the CRD, operate independently with their own volunteers and insurance, contributing thousands of hours annually to trail and facility maintenance and enhancement.
- **Type A Stewardship Groups** are formal partnerships with community groups for conservation and restoration projects. These groups typically hold conservation covenants and possess expertise in ecological restoration. They operate with signed agreements with the CRD and manage their own volunteers and insurance. Examples include Mayne Island Conservancy, Habitat Acquisition Trust, and The Land Conservancy of BC.

Section 2: Moving Forward (2026-2031)

2.1 National Trends in Volunteerism

[Statistics Canada's General Social Survey on Giving, Volunteering and Participating \(GSS-GVP\)](#), conducted every five years, provides the most comprehensive data on volunteering in Canada. The most recent survey (2023) is now releasing results. In addition, organizations such as Volunteer Management Professionals of Canada, Volunteer Canada and Volunteer Victoria contribute insights through conferences, forums and sector-wide discussions.

Key national trends include:

- **Declining participation:** Formal volunteering has decreased from 44% in 2013 to 32% in 2023, making recruitment and retention increasingly critical.
- **Mutual benefit:** Volunteering is now viewed as a reciprocal relationship that must meet the goals of both the volunteer and the organization.
- **Accessibility:** Inclusive and accessible volunteer opportunities are a growing expectation.
- **Equity and decolonization:** Programs are expected to evolve with a Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) lens and incorporate decolonizing practices.
- **Virtual engagement:** Online and remote volunteering opportunities remain a permanent feature.
- **Flexibility:** Volunteers increasingly seek episodic, convenient, and adaptable opportunities.

To remain relevant and resilient, volunteer programs must adapt to these trends and align organizational needs with volunteer expectations.

2.2 Volunteers and Outdoor Recreation

As visitation continues to grow in regional parks, recreation naturally expands with it. Volunteers play an essential role in the provision of outdoor recreation opportunities across BC. Many community-based recreation groups recruit passionate volunteers, organize volunteer events, and access a range of funding. Community-based not-for-profits can provide volunteers with specialist skills and knowledge to support the maintenance of optimized trails and facilities and provide high-quality visitor experience opportunities within regional parks. As a way to ameliorate declining participation and support mutual benefits, we can focus more on developing partnerships with community-based recreation groups.

2.3 Volunteer Satisfaction Survey Findings

In 2023, Regional Parks conducted a Volunteer Satisfaction Survey to better understand the experiences, motivations, and preferences of regular volunteers, as well as their perspectives on recognition, diversity, and inclusion. The survey aimed to strengthen the program by identifying gaps and opportunities for improvement.

Key findings:

- Volunteers reported high levels of satisfaction—feeling supported, appreciated and connected to the community.
- The program was described as well-organized, with nearly all respondents indicating they would recommend it to others.

Recommendations for improvement:

1. **Diversify participation:** Increase engagement of younger volunteers, BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People of Colour) communities and individuals with disabilities.
2. **Enhance reporting and data collection:** Strengthen systems to better measure, communicate, and celebrate volunteer contributions.
3. **Build community:** Foster stronger connections among volunteers and reinforce a culture of shared purpose.

2.4 Objectives (2026–2031)

Drawing on national trends and the Volunteer Satisfaction Survey findings (Appendix A), the following objectives will guide the program over the next five years:

1) Diversify the Volunteer Base:

- Engage a broader demographic, including youth, BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People of Colour) communities, and people with disabilities.
- Identify and address barriers to participation for underrepresented groups.
- Develop recruitment partnerships with newcomer programs, cultural organizations, youth groups, recreation groups and disability organizations.
- Offer flexible scheduling and varied opportunities to attract new demographics.

2) Promote, Recognize and Appreciate Volunteers:

- Strengthen promotion of volunteer opportunities through social media, signage, and other communication channels.
- Improve data collection and reporting to highlight volunteer achievements (e.g., before-and-after restoration pictures, invasive species removal totals).
- Continue meaningful recognition through events, tokens of appreciation, and regular acknowledgement.

3) Foster Opportunities for Learning and Connection:

- Provide ongoing education, training and skill-building opportunities.
- Create more opportunities for volunteers to connect socially, both in-person and digitally.

4) Update and Maintain Program Administration:

- Uphold the high standards of the CRD Regional Parks Volunteer Program.
- Refresh the volunteer mission and vision.
- Update policies, procedures and handbooks, ensuring they are accessible online.

2.5 Workplan (2026–2031)

The following workplan outlines the activities, timelines, and outcomes to achieve the identified objectives:

Objective 1: Diversify Volunteer Base		
Activity	Timeline	Outcome
Conduct focus group sessions with CRD staff, volunteers, First Nations, local environmental clubs (high schools), UVic, Camosun College, recreation groups, Recreation Integration, Power To Be and Newcomers to Victoria groups to identify barriers and potential new roles	2026	Focus group sessions completed.
Work with outdoor recreation specialist to develop more accessible volunteer opportunities and practices.	2026	More accessible opportunities and accessible information for volunteers.
Establish recruitment partnerships with community groups, local First Nations, high schools and post-secondary institutions	2027	New partnerships developed.
Diversify the types of partnerships and license agreements to enhance the opportunities available for existing formal groups.	2028	New license agreements signed.
Evaluate new programs through volunteer and staff surveys; adjust roles based on findings.	2028	Programs evaluated and refined.
Develop a comprehensive volunteer recruitment, retention and recognition strategy for CRD Regional Parks.	2029	Strategy completed and implemented.
Develop new volunteer positions and update existing role descriptions as needed; submit to People, Safety and Culture Division and the Union for approval.	Ongoing	New position descriptions developed and approved.

Objective 2: Promote, Recognize and Appreciate Volunteers

Activity	Timeline	Outcome
Advertise program activities, achievements, and recruitment opportunities through social media.	2026	Minimum of 12 posts per year.
Design and source new signage for volunteer work in regional parks; obtain management approval.	2026	Approved signage designs completed.
Contribute two to three articles annually to CRD Central highlighting program achievements and opportunities.	2026	Articles submitted to CRD Central.
Establish a protocol to have groups and staff collect regular before-and-after photos of projects.	2026	Photo library established for multiple uses.
Standardize collection and reporting of key metrics for restoration activities to measure and document impact over time.	2027	Consistent measurement of biomass removed and/or areas restored.
Update recognition mechanisms for license agreement holders, partners in parks, stewardship project groups and episodic volunteers.	2027	Updated volunteer recognition guidelines among groups and episodic volunteers.
Implement signage and kiosk information in parks to highlight volunteer contributions.	2028	Temporary signs installed in regional parks.
Update the CRD website to showcase volunteer achievements.	2028	Website updated with volunteer highlights.
Continue meaningful recognition through events (e.g., annual recognition event), tokens of appreciation (e.g., parking passes) and frequent written/verbal acknowledgement.	Ongoing	Variety of recognition activities delivered annually.

Objective 3: Foster Opportunities for Learning and Connection

Activity	Timeline	Outcome
Expand social connection opportunities within the program for both volunteers and staff with volunteers.	2026	Annual and episodic events held to strengthen volunteer community.
Review volunteer policies with a priority to decolonize language and statements following guidance from the new <i>Regional Parks Cultural Practice and Safety Policy</i> .	2027	Updated volunteer policies.
Develop neighbourhood-based volunteer groups adjacent to parks.	2028	Park-specific volunteer groups established
Work with outdoor recreation specialist to identify recreation focussed groups which could volunteer in regional parks.	2028	New recreation license groups established.
Consult with First Nations to identify new priority areas and partnership opportunities for shared stewardship.	2029	New stewardship opportunities identified with First Nations.
Establish contact with schools, recreation groups, conservation groups, colleges and universities near regional parks to explore stewardship partnerships.	2029	Initial discussions completed with potential partners.
Formalize partnerships with schools, recreation groups, conservation groups, colleges and universities; expand project sites as resources allow.	2029	Formalized agreements established and project sites expanded.
Provide ongoing continuing education, training and skill-building opportunities.	Ongoing	Minimum of three continuing education sessions offered annually.

Objective 4: Update and Maintain the Organization and Administration of the Volunteer Program

Activity	Timeline	Outcome
Assess recruitment, retention and recognition of volunteers; identify areas for improvement.	Annual	Annual assessment completed.
Collaborate with the communication coordinator to develop a communications plan that demonstrates program objectives and aligns with the Strategic Plan.	Annual	Annual Communications Plan completed.
Establish a working group of long-term volunteers to update the volunteer mission and vision.	2026	Update mission and vision.
Streamline and standardize agreement process for all group volunteers (Type A, Type B and Recreation Licence agreement holders).	2026	Single agreement process for all groups.
Update volunteer policies, procedures and handbooks; ensuring online accessibility.	2026	Updated resources published online.
Work with Corporate Occupational Health & Safety to confirm safety protocols for volunteers working independently in regional parks.	2026	Safety protocols reviewed and confirmed.
Formalize and standardize approval process for work planning, projects and annual reporting for agreement holders.	2027	A standardized process for all groups.
Improve efficiencies of volunteer statistics collection to ensure accurate, up-to-date reporting.	2028	Volunteer statistics recorded and easily updated.
Conduct volunteer satisfaction survey of long-term and short-term volunteers; gather input on current roles and new opportunities.	2029	Survey completed by >60% of long-term volunteers; results summarized.
Begin development of the 2031-2036 Volunteer Services Work Plan, incorporating Strategic Plans priorities and survey findings.	2030	Work initiated on Volunteer Services Work Plan.

Section 3: Key Program Considerations

As the CRD Regional Parks Volunteer Program continues to grow, several key factors must be considered to ensure its long-term success.

3.1 Staff Time and Resources

Volunteers require direction, training and ongoing support. All volunteer programs also need dedicated resources for supplies, uniforms, tools, recognition and administration. To be sustainable, staff involvement must be time-efficient and well-structured. While new volunteer roles bring significant benefits, they also require staff investment in supervision, training and project management.

Community interest in environmental stewardship is strong, particularly considering climate change and the United Nations designation of 2021–2030 as the **Decade on Ecosystem Restoration**. Expanding and diversifying volunteer opportunities will help CRD Regional Parks respond to this growing demand and strengthen its role in ecosystem protection.

3.2 Risk Management

Risk management is a critical consideration for the CRD. While liability considerations may influence the types of volunteer opportunities offered, the organization is committed to providing safe working environments and proactively managing risk across all volunteer programs.

Many long-term volunteer roles, such as volunteer naturalists, park stewards, and stewardship project groups, involve independent work in remote or wilderness settings. To address these risks, CRD Regional Parks will implement standardized safety orientation and training for all volunteers that reflect the nature of their roles and work environments. This will include the development and implementation of clear volunteer safety protocols, role-specific guidance, hazard awareness training, and emergency procedures.

The Volunteer Program will also implement consistent communication and risk-management tools, such as defined check-in procedures, incident reporting processes, and accessible safety resources, to support volunteers working independently and in the field. These measures are intended to reduce risk, clarify expectations, and ensure volunteers are adequately prepared, supported, and connected to staff.

Section 4: Adaptive Management and Measuring Success

The Volunteer Program is designed to achieve its objectives while remaining flexible and responsive. As the program evolves, objectives and workplans may shift based on lessons learned, emerging challenges, and new opportunities.

Staff will review activities annually, adapting approaches as needed and responding to direction from the CRD Board and CRD Executives.

Through thoughtful assessment and adaptive management, the Volunteer Program will remain a strong contributor to the goals of CRD Regional Parks and the interests of the community.

Appendix A: 2023 CRD Volunteer Satisfaction Report

Executive Summary

In 2023, a volunteer satisfaction survey was conducted to assess the experiences of regular volunteers, focusing on behaviours and preferences, motivations, preferred recognition, and diversity and inclusion. The purpose of the survey was to strengthen the Volunteer Program by meeting the needs of the current volunteers and identifying gaps in the Volunteer Program that would make it more resilient in the coming years. The Regional Parks Volunteer Program (the program) has been in operation for over 40 years, and it includes regular volunteers, recreation volunteers, partnerships with not-for-profits and stewardship groups, as well as episodic opportunities for corporations, schools, churches and other community groups.

The outcomes of the survey demonstrated that volunteers are mostly very satisfied with the program, with respondents feeling supported and appreciated, feeling more connected to the community and finding our program well-organized. Almost all respondents would recommend our Volunteer Program to a friend or loved one, which illustrates we are meeting their needs and expectations.

Based on the results of the survey, we have made recommendations to continue improving the program. This includes a focus on diversifying the demographics of the program to include younger volunteers, more BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People of Colour) individuals, and more opportunities for people with disabilities. Another focus is enhancing our reporting and data collection to better understand and acknowledge the value of volunteers within the organization and throughout the CRD, building a stronger community of volunteerism and strengthening our current service delivery.

The results from this survey will also form the foundation for the development of a volunteer services plan, providing vital insights into how to strengthen and grow the program now and into the future.

Appendix A - cont.

2023 CRD Volunteer Satisfaction Report

Introduction

The CRD Regional Parks Volunteer Program was initiated in 1982 and has since grown into a well-established program that facilitates over 5,600 volunteer hours/year. The program supports a combination of regular, episodic and recreation volunteers. In 2023, there were 280 registered regular volunteers and 160 actively contributed volunteer time, supporting diverse roles, including restoration (general and Type B stewardship groups), park stewards, naturalists, event volunteers and mountain bike stewards. The program also supports several episodic volunteers annually from corporations, not-for-profits, schools or churches that volunteer in single events. In 2023, there were 366 episodic volunteers. There are also several recreation volunteer groups that partner with CRD and contribute a significant number of hours to trail maintenance of mountain biking trails, maintaining the riding ring at Elk/Beaver Lake Regional Park, litter clean-up and more.

To ensure that volunteers are having a meaningful and satisfying volunteer experience, staff conducted a volunteer satisfaction survey (the survey) in November 2023. Only regular volunteers were surveyed at this time, as we do not collect individual contact information from episodic and recreation volunteers, and nor do they currently take part in our recognition activities on an individual level. There has never been a volunteer survey conducted to this extent by the Capital Regional District's Regional Parks Division. A previous volunteer satisfaction survey was conducted in 2011 and had less than 20 respondents and only specific roles, park stewards (called wardens in 2011) and naturalists, were surveyed.

Surveying of volunteers helps to increase retention and recruitment for the program by improving our understanding of the wants and needs of the volunteer base. Information from this survey will inform the development of a volunteer plan, as directed by the CRD Regional Parks and Trails Strategic Plan, to set overall program service delivery goals and to provide a diversity of opportunities for volunteers.

Methodology

Data Collection:

The survey included 20 questions using a combination of styles: multiple choice, ranking, and long-form. The survey was open for responses from November 7 to December 31, 2023 (~8 weeks) using an online survey platform called Checkbox, supported by the CRD. The survey was launched at the annual Volunteer Recognition and Appreciation event on November 4, 2023, and a link to the survey was emailed to all 280 registered volunteers. It was also posted in the private volunteer Facebook group (with approximately 70 members at the time). Several reminders to complete the survey were sent to volunteers between November 7 and December 31, 2023, via email and social media.

Data Analysis:

The Checkbox survey platform provided data analysis and associated graphics for the short-form, quantitative questions. For example, the platform assessed what the primary motivators were for all volunteers. Further analysis was later conducted by staff using the data to better understand multi-factor trends in the results. For example, staff assessed whether there were similar trends in responses among specific demographics.

Appendix A - cont.

2023 CRD Volunteer Satisfaction Report

Further analysis was conducted to better understand the results and potential trends of the Volunteer Program by combining multiple factors together. For example, we combined each of the main volunteer roles (naturalist, park steward, and restoration roles) and demographic data (age and race) with the questions on motivations, volunteer experience, and recognition to assess whether any trends were evident in volunteer responses based on demographics or current roles. However, due to the small sample size, any trends were not significant enough to have meaningful results.

Qualitative responses to long-form questions were coded into like themes and then tallied to provide quantifiable metrics (totals, percentages).

Survey Results and Discussion

Survey Design

In reviewing the below survey results, it's important to note that many questions had "not applicable" options or respondents were asked to "check all that apply". Due to this, respondents were able to select more than one response.

Respondent Bias

The respondents to this survey were exclusively regular volunteers and did not include episodic or recreation volunteers. The results provide an assessment of the satisfaction of those volunteers. Furthermore, due to there being a larger number of restoration volunteers in the program, most responses were from restoration volunteers (53%) which may reflect the experience and skew responses to that unique experience. Most respondents in the survey have volunteered for at least one year with the Volunteer Program. Long-term volunteers that are committed to the program and have built long-lasting relationships with the CRD are more likely to respond to the survey and are more likely to have favourable opinions of the program. This survey sample of CRD volunteers does not fully represent the program but provides valuable trends in general satisfaction for the program. Long-time volunteers may have a significant impact on the experience of new volunteers, and these metrics may be important in informing future decisions and management of the program.

Section 1: Background Results

Volunteering at CRD Regional Parks

A total of 280 volunteers were contacted to participate in the survey and 84 surveys were completed. This represents a survey response rate of 30%, which is higher than average for other CRD surveys. An additional 66 surveys were initiated by volunteers but incomplete and therefore excluded from the analysis to ensure survey entries were not counted more than once.

Appendix A - cont.

2023 CRD Volunteer Satisfaction Report

The results of the preliminary questions relating to general volunteer participation are as follows:

- **Volunteer roles:** 39 were restoration volunteers (53%), 28 were park stewards (30%), 9 were naturalists (9%), 4 were trail ambassadors (<1%) and 2 were mountain bike stewards (<1%). Some volunteers (7) occupied multiple roles.
- **Annual volunteer hours:** 48 respondents volunteered between 10 to 50 hours (57%), 16 respondents volunteered less than 10 hours (19%), 13 volunteered between 51 to 100 hours (16%) and 7 respondents volunteered over 100 hours per year (8%).
- **Years of Service:** the length of time a respondent had volunteered with us included 36 that have been volunteering 1 to 3 years (43%), 17 have been volunteering for over 10 years (20%), 11 that have volunteered for less than a year (13%), 12 have volunteered for 4 to 6 years (14%) and 8 that have volunteered for 7 to 10 years (10%).
- **Volunteer Frequency,** 28.6% of respondents volunteered 2 to 3 times per month (n=24), 27.4% (n=23) volunteer ad hoc (when they can fit it in), 17% (n=14) volunteer once a month, 16% (n=13) volunteer once per week and 11% (n=9) volunteer more than once per week.

When do volunteers prefer to volunteer?

When asked what days they prefer to volunteer, respondents could make multiple selections. The most popular response was “it depends” with 34 respondents (19%). Weekends were the next most popular selections with 18% selecting Sunday and 17% selecting Saturday. The weekdays followed with a moderate preference for Wednesday or Thursday (11% each) and Friday (9%), followed by Tuesday (8%) and the least popular day for volunteering being Monday with 7%.

When asked what time of day they prefer to volunteer, respondents selected mornings the most (46%) compared to 29% in the afternoon and 7% in the evening. Some respondents selected “it depends” (18%).

Section 1: Background Discussion

Most volunteers reported to contribute between 10 to 50 hours a year, which averages about one shift per month or less, depending on the volunteer.

According to Statistics Canada, the average amount of hours that a volunteer donates is between 82 to 222 hours per year, dependent on the age group (Hahmann, 2021). However, this includes all forms of formal volunteering, and many of the respondents could be volunteering at several organizations. Additionally, many of our volunteer roles are physically demanding and take place in remote areas, which may impact the number of hours volunteers can contribute on a regular basis.

When respondents were asked about their frequency of volunteering, most volunteers reported that they contributed between 2 to 3 times per month. This number was greater than anticipated based on the data but is likely overestimated as it may reflect their greatest intensity of volunteering throughout the year. Many retired volunteers, for example, do not volunteer consistently year-round due to holiday trips or unexpected leave throughout the year.

Appendix A - cont.

2023 CRD Volunteer Satisfaction Report

Non-retired volunteers often have full-time work, school and/or family commitments. Volunteers potentially report their highest frequency of volunteerism rather than their annual average.

The length of time that respondents reported to volunteer at the CRD indicates that most of the respondents have volunteered for 1 to 3 years (43%), and fewer volunteers that were committed for 4 to 6 years (14%) and 7 to 10 years (10%). Many (20%) respondents reported volunteering for at least 10 years. These results reflect expected trends because the program offers a lot of flexibility, and volunteers are generally very satisfied with the program. As indicated previously, respondent bias may also skew results towards longer-term volunteers.

It is unsurprising to see that more respondents prefer to work on weekends instead of during the weekdays, as several volunteers have obligations during the work week, such as work. Respondents also prefer volunteering in the mornings or afternoons, but generally, the day or time that works best for most volunteers really depends on circumstance. It is important to understand that volunteering at CRD Regional Parks may not be the primary focus in our volunteers' lives and honouring that will lead to greater retention in the long term.

Section 2: Motivation Results

What motivates our volunteers?

Volunteers were asked about the importance of specific factors that motivate them to volunteer by rating all factors on a 5-point scale from 'not at all important' to 'highly important', or 'not applicable'. Each volunteer is often motivated by several factors, as represented by the data. The factors that respondents selected as either 'highly important' or 'very important' are as follows:

- Passionate about the environment and parks (95%)
- Seeing the positive impact of their work (88%)
- Giving back to the community (83%)
- Feel like part of the community (73%)
- Learning new things (71%)
- Helping the public (66%)
- Sharing professional/personal knowledge (55%)
- Putting skills to use (53%)
- Being with or making friends (39%)
- Meeting new people (30%)
- Work experience for career (12%)

Is there anything else that motivates volunteers?

Volunteers were asked to provide long-form feedback on any additional motivations for volunteering. These responses were then grouped into themes. There was a total of 42 responses. The themes of motivation were:

- Being in nature (24%)
- Mitigating climate change (22%)

Appendix A - cont.

2023 CRD Volunteer Satisfaction Report

- Supporting safety and helping others (17%)
- Exposing park visitors to different trail uses, like horseback riding or biking (12%)
- Fostering a legacy for future generations (12%)
- Fitness and well-being (10%)
- Reconciliation (5%)

Section 2: Motivation Discussion

Understanding volunteer motivation is important because it ensures retention by meeting current volunteer needs, helps with communications for future volunteer recruitment and connects the volunteer base with an organization's mission.

The top three motivations for respondents include being passionate about the environment and parks, seeing the positive impact of their work and giving back to the community. This illustrates how dedicated and passionate CRD Regional Parks volunteers are to the natural environment and being committed to the community through parks. Meeting new people was reported as a low motivator. This may be because several volunteers (naturalists and park stewards) work alone and the role does not provide that opportunity. Furthermore, they may have selected the role because of the independent characteristics of it.

Respondents reported that they were least motivated for the purpose of gaining work experience; 79% felt it was either not at all important or not applicable to them. This may be because many respondents are retired (51% are over the age of 65), or late in their career (23% are between the ages of 55 and 64), and only a small number of volunteers that responded are in their early career where this would be relevant (only one respondent was between the ages of 18 and 24, and 6% were between the ages of 25 and 34).

As demonstrated by both multiple choice and long-form answers, most volunteers are motivated primarily by being in nature, contributing to the mitigation of climate change, and helping others. Regional Parks volunteers seem to seek a volunteer experience that allows them to express their love of the environment and their community.

Section 3: Volunteer Experience Results

What is their experience as a volunteer?

Volunteers were asked to rank their experience as a volunteer on a 5-point scale, from 'strongly disagree' to 'strongly agree' as well as 'not applicable', as it relates to ten key statements. Below is the list of statements with associated percent of respondents that selected either 'agree' or 'strongly agree':

1. I am making a positive impact (94%)
2. I have the knowledge and training I need for my volunteer role (91%)
3. I am appreciated by staff (87%)
4. I feel supported by staff (86%)
5. I feel comfortable contacting staff with any issues (85%)
6. The Volunteer Program is well-organized (82%)

Appendix A - cont.

2023 CRD Volunteer Satisfaction Report

7. I feel more connected to my community (82%)
8. I have developed new skills (67%)
9. I have opportunities to share my knowledge and expertise (66%)
10. I have met friends through volunteering (50%)

Very few respondents 'disagreed' or 'strongly disagreed' with the statements listed above, with the following exceptions:

- I have the knowledge and training I need for my volunteer role (1%)
- I feel more connected to my community (1%)
- I feel supported by staff (2%)
- I have developed new skills (5%)
- I have opportunities to share my knowledge and expertise (5%)
- I have met friends through volunteering (6%)

Section 3: Volunteer Experience Discussion

Understanding the volunteer experience helps to validate whether the program successfully meets the expectations and motivations of the volunteers. Generally, if their expectations and motivations are met, then volunteers will continue to volunteer, speak well of the program and recommend the program to friends and family.

Overall, volunteers are very satisfied with the current Volunteer Program. This reflects very positively on the hard work and excellence staff invested into building the program. Most respondents (94%) felt that they were making a positive impact and 82% felt they were more connected with their community. Most volunteers had positive impressions of the Volunteer Program (feeling appreciated and supported by staff, that the Volunteer Program is well-organized, that they can come to staff with concerns and that they have the training they need to perform their role).

Few volunteers reported that they "made friends through volunteering" which may reflect some of the types of volunteers that made up the survey (park stewards, trail ambassadors, mountain bike stewards, and naturalists) as they work in more solitary roles. However, while most of the respondents are not seeking friendship, they may be seeking community. Volunteering allows people to connect with and build their community, as reflected in their responses: most respondents want to feel more connected to their community (82%) or want to give back to their community (83%).

Section 4: Recognition Results

What kind of volunteer recognition is meaningful?

Volunteers were asked to score different types of recognition from 'not at all' to 'highly' meaningful, as well as 'not applicable'. The respondents selected 'highly' or 'very highly' meaningful to the following types of recognition:

- Free continuing education sessions for long-term volunteers (72%)
- A verbal "thank you" from staff (71%)
- Free seasonal parking passes for Thetis Lake and Sooke Potholes regional parks (62%)

Appendix A - cont.

2023 CRD Volunteer Satisfaction Report

- Volunteer recognition events (42%)
- Awards/gifts of Service (31%)
- Acknowledgement during National Volunteer Week (28%)
- Gifts for volunteers – like a mug or native plant seeds (27%)
- A free water bottle, T-shirt, or hat (25%)
- A holiday card (23%)
- Recognition in volunteer newsletter (20%)
- Recognition on social media (17%)

What kind of recognition event do volunteers prefer?

When asked what type of recognition event volunteers prefer, 56% selected that they enjoyed the large annual gathering that is currently provided, 21% prefer not to go to recognition events, and 15% would enjoy smaller and more frequent recognition events.

Section 4: Recognition Discussion

Providing meaningful recognition to volunteers is important because appreciating volunteers is one of the most important aspects of any volunteer program. It promotes satisfaction in the program and increases retention of volunteers. All successful volunteer programs will have various forms of recognition activities, gifts, awards and rewards. Generally, a variety of recognition measures are implemented to ensure that at least one form of recognition will resonate with an individual volunteer.

According to research, a personal verbal “thank you” is one of the strongest forms of recognition for volunteer programs (Volunteer Canada, 2017). This is reflected in the volunteer survey results. Providing volunteers with opportunities for continuing education sessions and gifting free parking passes were also highly valued by the respondents. The least meaningful forms of recognition for volunteers were being recognized in social media, the volunteer newsletter, or receiving a holiday card.

When asked if volunteers preferred a larger or smaller volunteer recognition event, 56% selected the larger event, similar to what is currently provided. Most larger volunteer programs offer an annual recognition event, and the formality of the event allows other CRD staff, management, and board directors to thank volunteers for their contributions, which may be meaningful to the volunteers.

Section 5: Demographics Results

The following is a summary of the respondent’s demographics:

- 61% of the respondents were women and 36% were men. The remaining preferred not to answer or were non-binary.
- 51% of the respondents were 65 years or older, 23% were age 55 to 64, 12% were 35 to 44, 6% were 25 to 34 and 6% were age 45 to 54. There was only one respondent who was between the ages of 18 and 24.

Appendix A - cont.

2023 CRD Volunteer Satisfaction Report

- 8% of the respondents identified as having a disability, with 91% identifying as having no disability. The remaining respondents choose “prefer not to answer”.
- 11% of the respondents identified as non-white, and 81% identifying as white/Caucasian.
- 62% of the respondents reported having a master’s or bachelor’s degree, 15% have some university/college/trade school, and 11% have a college or non-university certificate or diploma. The remaining percentages were split relatively evenly between high school diploma, registered apprenticeship or trade certificate, university doctorate or post-doctorate, university certificate or diploma below a bachelor’s degree or “prefer not to answer”.

Favourite Part of the Program

Volunteers were asked what their favourite part of the program was, using a long-form qualitative question. Responses were grouped and tallied based on prevalent themes within all answers. Total number of responses was 59. The general themes include the following topics:

- Being part of the community & interaction with others (32%)
- Being outside (20%)
- Seeing the impact of their work (19%)
- Feeling useful/giving back (14%)
- Learning (8%)
- Being closer to the land (3%)

Would volunteers recommend our Volunteer Program?

Lastly the respondents were asked if they would recommend our Volunteer Program to a friend—96% said “yes”, and 4% said “unsure”. No one selected “no”.

Anything Else?

In a long-form question, volunteers were asked if there was anything else they would like to add. The themes which had more than a single response were:

- Thank you to CRD for the Volunteer Program (71%)
- Need for better management of invasive species in parks (8%)
- Need for better promotion of volunteer opportunities (8%)

Section 6: Program Improvement Discussion

When asked what could make the program better, volunteers predominantly responded with “no improvements necessary”. Many volunteers also indicated an interest in more continuing education opportunities. Historically, the program provided 3 to 4 continuing education sessions each year, but in 2020 to 2022 (during COVID), continuing education sessions were paused, and as of 2023, had not returned to pre-COVID levels.

When asked what their favourite parts of the program are: being part of the community and interaction with others (32%), being outside (20%) and seeing the impact of their work (19%). This mirrored the top motivations: giving back to the community, passionate about regional parks and the environment, and seeing the positive impact of their

Appendix A - cont.

2023 CRD Volunteer Satisfaction Report

work. This tells us that we are meeting their needs as their favourite part of the program is what is motivating their volunteer experience.

Over 96% of volunteers would recommend the program to their friends, and no one said that they wouldn't, which tells us that they trust the program and believe it is a high enough caliber to recommend it to the important people in their lives.

Program Recommendations

The responses from the survey provided valuable insights to support the ongoing improvement of the Volunteer Program and inform the development of a volunteer plan for the CRD's Regional Parks Division. The following recommendations will be taken into consideration moving forward, given available capacity and resources:

Diversify the Volunteer Base:

- Seek opportunities to engage and motivate a more diverse volunteer base (e.g., younger volunteers, Black/Indigenous/People of Colour (BIPOC) volunteers).
- Identify and mitigate barriers that exist for underrepresented groups (youth and young adults, BIPOC, people with disabilities) which may prevent them from participating in the program.
- Identify recruitment partnerships to improve recruitment of those underrepresented groups. For example, partnering with newcomer programs and other cultural organizations, youth groups and disability organizations could increase our diversity of volunteers.
- Explore opportunities to provide variable days and times to engage new demographics.

Promote, Recognize and Appreciate Volunteers:

- Improve promotion of volunteer opportunities and the Volunteer Program. This could be accomplished through social media, signage, and other communications.
- Improve data collection, reporting and promotion of volunteer achievements in regional parks and trails to the greater community (e.g., before and after pictures, sharing volume of invasive species collected).
- Continue to support meaningful recognition through events (e.g., annual recognition event), gifts (e.g., free parking passes) and frequent written and verbal acknowledgement.

Foster Opportunities for Learning and Connection:

- Seek opportunities to continue supporting continuing education, training opportunities and social engagement opportunities.
- Seek opportunities to build community within the program and increase opportunities for volunteers to connect with each other either digitally or in-person.

Conclusion

Volunteering is changing. Today, more than ever, there are external forces that are shifting the landscape of volunteering, including the economy, COVID, and family commitments, all while volunteering rates have declined drastically across the country (Volunteer Victoria, 2019) and continue to decline post-COVID (Volunteer Victoria, 2023).

Appendix A - cont.
2023 CRD Volunteer Satisfaction Report

In order to ensure a resilient Volunteer Program, it needs to adapt and grow to meet the needs of our current and future volunteers. The purpose of this survey was to discover what is important to volunteers and to determine ways in which the program can be improved and strengthened during these changing times. The survey painted a picture of volunteers that value the environment and their community, they value learning and knowing the impact of their work. Volunteers value the flexibility, organization, and support of the current program; they value being appreciated and thanked personally; and value being acknowledged for their expertise. The program can be improved by identifying challenges and barriers within our current program for a more diverse volunteer base and to better plan for the succession of the aging volunteer population.

Appendix B: Agreement between CRD and CUPE 1978

Agreement between CRD and CUPE 1978 on approved volunteer activities in regional parks and trails (1999).

1. The following is a list of volunteer in parks (VIP) positions that the union has already approved, and which do not currently require approval in individual cases. VIPs are individuals who regularly volunteer for a minimum of one year.
 - VIP naturalists
 - VIP gatekeepers
 - VIP beekeepers
 - VIP wardens
 - VIP advisory group members
2. Community Groups: members of a community group who volunteer for a one-time, short-term project such as:
 - planting of native trees and plants
 - removal of exotic/invasive species (e.g., scotch broom, daphne, ivy, gorse, orchard grass, tree lupine, knapweed, purple loosestrife, Himalayan blackberry, etc.)
 - restoration of streams, rivers, lakes and ponds
 - clean up of garbage and debris (in parks, trails and beaches) not picked up on a routine basis by staff
3. Work Experience: individuals enrolled in a recognized program that are required to complete a temporary work experience placement. Work experience placements (length of service varies) could entail:
 - job shadowing (observing employees while they work)
 - assisting employees with their daily duties
 - assisting staff with specific work projects

Note: Volunteers are never used to displace employees from their positions. They only enhance the operations of CRD Regional Parks and help to meet our mandate. Any pre-approval does not waive the requirement for an annual use of volunteers report to CRD Human Resources.

References

- Dunae, P., Forward, C., & Newcomb, J. (2022, December 12). *Victoria (BC)*. Retrieved from The Canadian Encyclopedia: [https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/victoria-bc#:~:text=The%20vast%20majority%20of%20people,Irish%20\(20.7%20per%20cent\)](https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/victoria-bc#:~:text=The%20vast%20majority%20of%20people,Irish%20(20.7%20per%20cent).).
- Hahmann, T. (2021, April 23). *Volunteering counts: Formal and informal contributions of Canadians in 2018*. Retrieved from Statistics Canada: <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/75-006-x/2021001/article/00002-eng.htm>
- Proof Strategies. (2023, February 9). *Trust in government is recovering but a new “generational trust gap” is emerging*. Retrieved from GlobeNewswire: <https://www.globenewswire.com/en/news-release/2023/02/09/2604785/0/en/Trust-in-government-is-recovering-but-a-new-generational-trust-gap-is-emerging.html>
- StatsCAN. (2022, April 25). *National Volunteer Week*. Retrieved from Statistics Canada: <https://www.statcan.gc.ca/01/en/plus/825-national-volunteer-week>
- Volunteer Canada. (2017). *Recognizing Volunteering in 2017: Summary Report*. Ottawa: Volunteer Canada.
- Volunteer Victoria. (2019). *Volunteer Victoria: Case for Support 2019*. Retrieved from Volunteer Victoria: <https://volunteervictoria.bc.ca/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/Volunteer-Victoria-Case-for-Support-2019.pdf>
- Volunteer Victoria. (2023). *Senior Volunteering Project: The Impact of COVID and Pandemic Precautions on Senior Volunteers*. Retrieved from Volunteer Victoria: <https://volunteervictoria.bc.ca/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/Senior-Volunteering-Project-screen.pdf>