

REPORT TO REGIONAL PARKS COMMITTEE MEETING OF WEDNESDAY, APRIL 23, 2025

SUBJECT Island View Beach Regional Park - Accessibility Improvements

ISSUE SUMMARY

Capital Regional District (CRD) staff seek approval to partner with the District of Central Saanich (Central Saanich) and Tsawout First Nation to improve meaningful accessibility at Island View Beach Regional Park (IVBRP).

BACKGROUND

In 2022, an Island View Beach Working Group (IVB Working Group) consisting of staff from the Tsawout First Nation, Central Saanich and the CRD was formed to address shared interest in a Mosquito Abatement Program. As recognition of overlapping interests increased, the group began to meet in a more formal capacity with a Terms of Reference being adopted in 2024.

At the September 11, 2024 CRD Board meeting, the following motion with notice was carried:

That staff report to the Regional Parks Committee on the development and potential partnership with the District of Central Saanich and Tsawout First Nation on park accessibility improvements in Island View Beach Regional Park around three major areas:

- 1. Parking facilities;*
- 2. Trails and kiosk; and*
- 3. Development of a wheelchair accessible foreshore (beach) access.*

PROGRESS UPDATE

Following the CRD Board's direction, CRD staff met with Central Saanich and the Tsawout First Nation on November 6, 2024 to discuss CRD Regional Parks' Accessibility Program and to seek partnership opportunities to improve meaningful accessibility at IVBRP. Current initiatives include:

- An application was submitted to the Department of Fisheries and Oceans for the installation of a Mobi-mat that would provide wheelchair access from the accessible trail to the beach at IVBRP.
- Central Saanich is considering improvements to parking facilities on Homathko Road, using the CRD's accessible parking guidelines.
- The CRD conducted an annual accessibility maintenance audit of IVBRP in 2024, assessing all park facilities. This audit will be repeated in 2025 with input from Central Saanich and Tsawout First Nation.

To ensure ongoing communication, collaboration and planning for further accessibility improvements, staff propose using the IVB Working Group as a platform for generating and refining future projects.

ALTERNATIVES

Alternative 1

The Regional Parks Committee recommends to the Capital Regional District Board:
That CRD Regional Parks staff continue to collaborate with the District of Central Saanich and Tsawout First Nation, through the Island View Beach Working Group, to identify opportunities for partnership, on new initiatives to improve meaningful accessibility at Island View Beach Regional Park.

Alternative 2

The Regional Parks Committee recommends to the Capital Regional District Board:
That the approach to improving meaningful accessibility within Island View Beach Regional Park be referred back to staff with alternative direction.

IMPLICATIONS

Alignment with Existing Plans & Strategies

Goal 5 of the Regional Parks and Trails Strategic Plan 2022-2032 focuses on making regional parks and trails inclusive and accessible. Additionally, Goal 1 of the 2024 CRD Accessibility Plan aims to improve physical accessibility of CRD facilities and services, ensuring persons with disabilities can access, participate and gain employment with the CRD.

Equity, Diversity & Inclusion Implications

In 2018, Statistics Canada estimated that 20.5% of BC's population aged 15-64 and 41.7% of BC's overall population had one or more disabilities. Accessibility and inclusion involve creating communities and services that allow everyone to participate without barriers. Staff are engaging the CRD Accessibility Advisory Committee about the potential installation of a Mobi-mat to gather input from people with lived experience of disability. This input will be shared with the IVB Working Group.

Environmental Implications

Creating a clear access route to the beach will help minimize ecological impacts from trampling the foreshore habitat. The proposed Mobi-mat will provide a single access point, consolidating accessible beach access to a single area of the regional park.

Social Implications

Outdoor recreation improves quality of life by benefiting mental and physical health and promoting social and community connections. Barrier-free facilities benefit all park visitors, not just people with disabilities, and enhance the visitor experience for various outdoor activities.

To improve accessibility, CRD staff conduct an annual accessibility maintenance audit at IVBRP. Through the IVB Working Group, CRD staff will engage Central Saanich and Tsawout First Nation during the 2025 annual accessibility maintenance audit and will use the results of the audit as a way of identifying opportunities to work together to improve accessible facilities at IVBRP.

The 2024 audit identified the need to improve accessible parking at IVBRP. Central Saanich staff, with support from CRD staff, are currently considering options for upgrading the accessible parking at the Homathko Road parking lot, which provides parking for IVBRP. The audit also identified lack of accessibility to the beach as a barrier to park visitors with disabilities.

CRD staff have applied to the Department of Fisheries and Oceans to install a Mobi-mat at IVBRP. Mobi-mats are portable, wheelchair-accessible pathways providing a firm and stable surface. Pending the completion of an internal ecological assessment, it is expected the Mobi-mat will be installed as a seasonal pilot in 2025. Following the pilot, CRD staff will seek input from user groups about the efficacy of the Mobi-mat and will share that input with the IVB Working Group with a goal to identify more opportunities to partner on improving beach accessibility.

Financial Implications

Creating a wheelchair accessible foreshore requires approximately \$9,500 for the Mobi-mat, which has a lifespan of about 10 years. The Mobi-mat to be installed at IVBRP was purchased utilizing core budget in 2024. The annual installation and seasonal operations of the Mobi-mat are estimated to take 100 hours of staff time. Ongoing maintenance and improvements to trails and kiosks are part of regular operations and are funded through Regional Parks' core budget. New capital infrastructure projects aimed at improving accessibility will be considered through the annual budget and service planning process.

First Nations Implications

Staff will seek opportunities to work closely with Tsawout First Nation on accessibility improvements at IVBRP. This will include looking for projects and initiatives that can be done in partnership, such as access and storage for canoes and improving access to areas of cultural importance within the park.

Intergovernmental Implications

Opportunities for the development of new accessibility initiatives at Island View Beach will be considered through the IVB Working Group. The purpose of the IVB Working Group is to bring together representatives of the CRD, Central Saanich and Tsawout First Nation where there is an interest in the planning, management, use and/or operation of IVBRP, Island View Community Park, T~EN, the Lochside Regional Trail, QEN'T Marine Protected Area, and/or other areas within the jurisdiction of one or more of the IVB Working Group members where there are overlapping interests to identify and discuss issues, share information, generate recommendations and/or seek support for activities related to the area of interest.

Service Delivery Implications

Accessibility improvements and initiatives that provide unique, meaningful opportunities will be prioritized and captured within CRD Regional Parks' service plan and budget.

CONCLUSION

At the September 11, 2024 CRD Board meeting, CRD staff were asked to determine and report back on partnership opportunities related to accessibility improvements at Island View Beach

Regional Park. Staff are currently working with the Central Saanich and the Tsawout First Nation to address facility improvements identified in the CRD Board notice of motion, including upgrading accessible parking and piloting the provision of wheelchair-accessible beach access through the installation of a Mobi-mat. The Island View Beach Working Group provides an established venue for discussing opportunities and developing partnerships between the CRD, Central Saanich and Tsawout First Nation. Staff are seeking direction to use the established Island View Beach Working Group as the venue for identifying partnership opportunities to improve accessibility at Island View Beach Regional Park.

RECOMMENDATION

The Regional Parks Committee recommends to the Capital Regional District Board:
That CRD Regional Parks staff continue to collaborate with the District of Central Saanich and Tsawout First Nation, through the Island View Beach Working Group, to identify opportunities for partnership, on new initiatives to improve meaningful accessibility at Island View Beach Regional Park.

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