



**REPORT TO PARKS & ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE
MEETING OF WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 27, 2019**

SUBJECT **Mill Farm Regional Park Reserve – Approval of Interim Management Guidelines**

ISSUE SUMMARY

The Regional Parks Division seeks approval of the Interim Management Guidelines for Mill Farm Regional Park Reserve (Mill Farm) on Salt Spring Island.

BACKGROUND

This regional park reserve on Salt Spring Island was acquired in three stages between 1996 and 2004; however, a management plan has not been developed, and due to other management planning priorities, a full comprehensive plan for this area is not envisioned to be initiated before 2025. However, since basic infrastructure development is needed now to manage for public access and safety, and there are environmental values that require protection measures, a set of interim management guidelines (Appendix A) has been prepared for Mill Farm that is intended for use over the next five-year period as interim direction.

Completing interim management guidelines is an alternative way to identify issues within a park and provide short-term goals and management direction for the protection, development and use of an area. They can be developed for newly-acquired areas at the time of land acquisition or when the lands are expected to be, or have been, in park reserve status for an extended period of time (such as Mill Farm).

Since interim management guidelines (IMGs) do not undergo the level of public consultation or First Nations engagement typically associated with a management planning process, they can be developed relatively quickly by staff. IMGs support decision-making in an interim period but do not propose major developments or projects. As past examples of this approach, Ayum Creek Regional Park had IMGs developed in 2002 and Sooke Potholes in 2005, until they were replaced with more comprehensive management plans in 2010.

ALTERNATIVES

Alternative 1

The Parks & Environment Committee recommends to the Capital Regional District Board:
That the Interim Management Guidelines for Mill Farm Regional Park Reserve be approved.

Alternative 2

The Parks & Environment Committee refer the Interim Management Guidelines for Mill Farm Regional Park Reserve back to staff with direction.

IMPLICATIONS

Social Implications

Staff conducted focused engagement with key stakeholder groups in August and received input and comments that were incorporated into the IMGs. The IMGs provide an interim development concept by outlining a limited level of facility development, such as providing a small parking area within the park, which will reduce the potential for roadside parking on the narrow public access road. In addition, the IMGs propose formalizing several trails, including a primary trail linking to adjacent Burgoyne Bay Provincial Park and a side trail to a primary viewpoint overlooking the ocean, to provide a defined but limited interim trail system. These enhancements will have a positive social benefit since no recreational facilities have been formally developed or maintained in Mill Farm, as of yet.

Environmental & Climate Implications

These guidelines are intended to ensure environmental values are identified and not negatively impacted through interim development or public use. The IMGs also outline ecological and archaeological information that should be gathered in advance of the development of a future park management plan.

Financial Implications

For plan implementation, existing staff will undertake ongoing operations and maintenance needs and any facility development will be dependent on available financial and staff resources, as addressed through Regional Parks' core and capital budgets. Short- and medium-term actions in the IMGs will be considered alongside other regional parks projects but are tentatively scheduled for the period of 2020-2022 and primarily involve minor facility and trail development and establishment of parking infrastructure. A capital expenditure of \$20,000 is currently budgeted.

Intergovernmental Implications

The interim development proposed is consistent with the land covenant held by the Province of BC on the southwest parcel of the Mill Farm property. In addition, the proposed trail link to the adjacent Burgoyne Bay Provincial Park and the proposed trail use (hiking, cycling and equestrian) are consistent with the provincial park's management plan.

ALIGNMENT WITH EXISTING PLANS & STRATEGIES

By "completing or updating park and trail management plans for priority parks and trails", these plans are aligned with this action, as identified as Strategic Priority 1 in the Regional Parks 2012-2021 Strategic Plan: Strengthen the Management of Existing Parks & Trails.

CONCLUSION

Completing management plans for priority parks are key actions consistent with the Regional Park 2012-2021 Strategic Plan. In 2019, Interim Management Guidelines were prepared by staff for Mill Farm, which included key stakeholder input. The IMG is intended to provide temporary guidance and direction for Regional Parks to manage visitor use in this area over the next five-year period. The Mill Farm Interim Management Guidelines are now proposed for decision.

RECOMMENDATION

The Parks & Environment Committee recommends to the Capital Regional District Board:
That the Interim Management Guidelines for Mill Farm Regional Park Reserve be approved.

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: Mill Farm Regional Park Reserve Interim Management Guidelines