



Making a difference...together

REPORT TO REGIONAL PARKS COMMITTEE MEETING OF WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 27, 2023

SUBJECT **Service Planning 2024 – Regional Parks Community Need Summary**

ISSUE SUMMARY

To provide strategic context and an overview of services, initiatives and performance data related to the Regional Parks Community Need.

BACKGROUND

The Capital Regional District (CRD) Board approved the 2023-2026 Board Priorities on March 8, 2023. Staff then developed the 2023-2026 CRD Corporate Plan, which was approved by the CRD Board on April 12, 2023.

The CRD Corporate Plan presents the work the organization needs to deliver over the four-year term, along with the critical regional, sub-regional and local services, to meet the region's most important needs (i.e., Community Needs) and advance the Board's Vision and Priorities. Board Priorities, Corporate Plan initiatives and core service delivery form the foundation of the five-year financial plan.

The 2024 planning cycle marks the first year of the implementation of the 2023-2026 CRD Corporate Plan. The CRD's annual service plans, known as Community Need Summaries, provide an overview of the operational and strategic context, services levels, initiatives, and performance data for each Community Need. They also provide details of the initiatives, associated staffing, timing and service levels required to advance the work in future years.

The Regional Parks Community Need Summary is attached as Appendix A. The desired outcome is additional land acquisitions and increased access to parks and recreational trails that are safe, respect Indigenous culture and conservation values.

The CRD reports on the progress of its initiatives and services on a regular basis. The Board receives updates about the Board Strategic Priorities through the Chief Administrative Officer Quarterly Progress Reports. The Board also receives an overview of progress made on delivering the Corporate Plan twice a year at the strategic check-in and provisional budget meetings, which take place in the spring and fall respectively. The next strategic check-in will take place in spring 2024. During the year, standing committees and commissions also fulfill an oversight and advisory role in relation to the work.

ALTERNATIVES

Alternative 1

The Regional Parks Committee recommends the Committee of the Whole recommend to the Capital Regional District Board:

That Appendix A, Community Need Summary – Regional Parks, be approved as presented and form the basis of the Provisional 2024-2028 Financial Plan.

Alternative 2

The Regional Parks Committee recommends the Committee of the Whole recommend to the Capital Regional District Board:

That Appendix A, Community Need Summary – Regional Parks, be approved as amended and form the basis of the Final 2024-2028 Financial Plan.

IMPLICATIONS

Governance Implications

In 2024, staff have prioritized programs and initiatives that:

- Advance 2023-2026 Board Priorities or Corporate Plan initiatives;
- Operationalize capital investments; and/or
- Are necessary to maintain a core service level following a regulatory change or where there is a safety risk to customers, communities, or staff.

The Executive Leadership Team (ELT) has reviewed and assessed all initiative business cases and confirmed alignment with the criteria. ELT has determined that the consolidated package of work is appropriate and a proportional response to the CRD Board's and communities' expectations of the organization.

Financial Implications

To exercise constraint and cost containment, the CRD Board directed staff to keep the core inflationary adjustment to 3.5% through the 2024 Service and Financial Planning Guidelines. Staff and management have taken the necessary steps to mitigate the financial impact of proposed initiatives, as well as cost escalation and high inflation rate experienced in 2022 through to 2023.

Financial and staff impacts for initiatives will be summarized and included in the provisional budget, which will be presented at the Committee of the Whole meeting scheduled for October 25, 2023. Starting this year, this will also include a five-year forecast of staffing level changes, which will be reviewed annually.

A separate supplemental service budget report will be submitted to the Regional Parks committee.

Service Delivery Implications

Appendix A includes information about existing service delivery, operational considerations and performance. Additional information has been provided below about the proposed changes for 2024.

Staff are proposing to advance three new initiatives for the Regional Parks Community Need that have financial implications for 2024, as shown in Table 1. The key drivers for the initiatives are:

1. advancing a Board or Corporate Plan Priority;
2. operationalizing capital investment(s); and
3. adjustments to core service levels to maintain safety and regulatory obligations.

Table 1. Regional Parks Community Need Initiatives (2024)

Initiative	Implementation year(s)	Staff impacts (2024)	Incremental cost (2024)	Funding source
7c-3.1 Elk/Beaver Lake Water Quality Monitoring	2024-2026	-	\$25,000	Requisition
7e-3.1 Asset Management Engineered Structure Inspections	2024-ongoing	-	\$225,000	Requisition
7f-1.1 First Nations Strategic Priority Initiatives	2024-ongoing	-	\$300,000	Requisition

The information in Table 1 reflects the initiative business case costs, which ELT reviewed as part of its annual assessment of initiatives. The financial impacts reflect full program costs, including cost of staffing.

7c-3.1 Elk/Beaver Lake Water Quality Monitoring

Elk/Beaver Lake Regional Park is one of the busiest regional parks, with high recreational and ecological values. The lake has been impacted by nutrient loading from the surrounding area and invasive species, which has resulted in increased algae blooms and weed growth, which in turn impacts recreational use and ecosystem function. The CRD Board approved the installation of an in-lake oxygenation system in 2023 to help improve water quality.

Initiative 7c-3.1 follows this earlier initiative and seeks a one-time increase to the Regional Parks core budget in 2024-2026 to gather data to assess the overall health of the lake over time and make recommendations to support the long-term management of water quality at Elk/Beaver Lake and operation of the oxygenation system.

7e-3.1 Asset Management Engineered Structure Inspections

The Regional Parks division manages a portfolio of 41 dam, bridge and trestle engineered structures that are critical to delivering the regional parks and trails service. To meet the established guidelines and regulatory requirements set by the Province, engineered inspections and condition assessments are required. Assurance statements for engineered structures are also required to follow regulations and must be provided by qualified professional engineers. The cost to complete engineered inspections on critical aging infrastructure have increased in recent years.

Initiative 7e-3.1 seeks to increase the Regional Parks core budget to address the rising cost of engineered inspections of regional park dam, bridge and trestle structure. Doing so will enable the Regional Parks division to ensure regulatory compliance and to extend the service life of aging critical infrastructure.

7f-1.1 First Nations Strategic Priority Initiatives

First Nations wish to be involved in the implementation of the recently refreshed Regional Parks and Trails Strategic Plan 2022-2032 and have stressed that there should be “nothing about us, without us.”

Current short-term transactional arrangements for engaging First Nations on regional park and regional trail initiatives are no longer sufficient to advance reconciliation efforts and meaningfully involve and collaborate with First Nations in the operation and management of regional parks and regional trails. Additional capacity is required to support strengthening relationships and to move toward co-development of long-term agreements that recognize and support reconciliation, self-determination, decision-making and economic independence related to regional parks and regional trails.

Initiative 7f-1.1 seeks an increase to the Regional Parks core budget to provide additional capacity funding to facilitate this work.

CONCLUSION

CRD staff are progressing initiatives identified in the 2023-2026 CRD Corporate Plan, including the Board Priorities. The CRD Board and commissions with delegated authorities determine resourcing through the annual review and approval of the provisional financial plan. To support decision-making, staff provide recommendations on funding, timing and service levels through the service and financial planning processes.

RECOMMENDATION

The Regional Parks Committee recommends the Committee of the Whole recommend to the Capital Regional District Board:

That Appendix A, Community Need Summary – Regional Parks, be approved as presented and form the basis of the Provisional 2024-2028 Financial Plan.

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: Community Need Summary – Regional Parks