

**REPORT TO REGIONAL PARKS COMMITTEE
MEETING OF WEDNESDAY, JUNE 25, 2025**

SUBJECT **2025 Summer Outreach and Education Overview**

ISSUE SUMMARY

To inform the Regional Parks Committee of the summer 2025 priorities for public education and outreach that will be delivered by the Capital Regional District (CRD) Regional Parks Interpretive and Compliance and Enforcement Programs (Park Ranger Program).

BACKGROUND

With over nine million visits per year as of 2024, CRD regional parks and trails continue to see growing popularity, particularly between June and September, which account for 42% of annual visits. To ensure a positive experience for all visitors while preserving park values, the Park Ranger and Interpretive Programs work together to provide proactive engagement, education and management. Rangers focus on visitor safety and compliance, while interpreters foster an appreciation for the natural and cultural heritage of the region. Through their combined efforts, they help mitigate conflicts, protect the environment and instill a lasting sense of stewardship.

The Park Ranger Program plays a vital role in managing this high visitation, ensuring both safety and environmental integrity. Led by a senior ranger and supported by full-time and auxiliary staff during peak months, rangers patrol the parks, enforce regulations, support wildfire prevention efforts and assist with public awareness campaigns. The Interpretive Program complements these efforts by engaging visitors through education and outreach. With a team led by an interpretation coordinator and including an Indigenous cultural programmer, park interpreters deliver school programs, guided walks, and community events to foster stewardship and responsible park use. Their efforts ensure that rising visitation translates into meaningful connections with the parks and a commitment to their protection.

As visitation trends continue to rise, both programs are preparing for the summer of 2025 with seasonally strengthened staffing levels. Throughout June to September, Park Rangers will log a total of 1,593 patrol hours and Interpreters will contribute 2,740 hours to public education. Their combined presence will ensure CRD parks remain welcoming, safe and well-protected for all visitors.

2025 Work Plan Summary

Overarching priorities for summer of 2025 will include:

Visitor safety in parks, including water safety – Park rangers allocate 30% of their patrol hours to busy swimming locations such as Thetis Lake, Elk/Beaver Lake and Sooke Potholes to remind park visitors about recreating safely in and on the water. Rangers will also be collaborating with partner agencies such as Transport Canada Boating Safety Officers and the Lifesaving Society of BC to share vital safety information with park visitors. In addition, park rangers will also work alongside CRD Bylaw Enforcement Officers who will be patrolling regional parks and educating

park visitors about the regional parks rules and regulations and addressing unsafe behaviour related to alcohol, drugs and other cognitive inhibitors.

Wildfire prevention – During the summer of 2025, park rangers will dedicate 27% of their hours to patrolling regional parks, trails and campgrounds to address wildfire prevention. Their patrol efforts will focus on engaging with visitors who are smoking or having unauthorized campfires and taking steps to mitigate the associated fire risks. In addition to these regular patrols, park rangers will collaborate with BC Park Rangers to monitor backcountry areas, such as Sea to Sea Regional Park and the neighbouring Sooke Mountain Provincial Park, for signs of fire activity in remote parts of the region. Moreover, in parks that are closer to urban areas, park rangers will work alongside Island Health's Tobacco and Vapour Enforcement Officers to address smoking-related fire risks and ensure compliance with regulations. These combined efforts aim to reduce fire hazards and promote safety throughout the region.

Prioritize safe regional trail use – Park rangers will allocate 16% of their patrol hours to the regional trails, with the assistance of e-bikes. These patrols are highly effective in covering large stretches of the trail system and engaging with many trail users. Park rangers will watch for trail users who are not adhering to posted signage, travelling excessively fast or who are utilizing the trail in a manner that may pose a safety risk to others. Ensuring trail users are sharing the trail, minding their speed and not disturbing others are all pillars of CRD's annual Cruise with Courtesy campaign which will begin again in July, supported by both the park rangers and park interpreters.

Public education and engagement – The summer of 2025 will see the interpreters delivering 95 programs in nine different regional parks across the region. The team will also attend community events, including National Indigenous Peoples Day at Royal Roads University, World Ocean Day at Parks Canada and at the Shaw Centre for the Salish Sea, Power to Be's Have a Go Event and Go by Bike Week with Capital Bike. Interpretive staff will also host three festival-style drop-in events which encourage visitors to connect with nature and culture through activities, games, crafts and guided walks and will partner with 23 different organizations to deliver partnered programs and enhance drop-in events.

Improve access and equity – Park interpreters established a strategic partnership with the City of Victoria to increase access to regional parks. This summer, on three occasions, the City of Victoria will provide a recreation bus and drive visitors from a central meeting point to a regional park that has poor public transit access and visitors will participate in a guided walk with an interpreter. The interpretive team will also continue a successful partnership with Power to Be to provide accessible programs for those who face physical, cognitive or financial barriers to accessing nature. For these programs, participants can borrow adaptive equipment from Power to Be and staff provide modifications or personalized support as required.

Improve cultural safety, appreciation and education in parks – This summer, the Indigenous cultural programmer will continue to offer public walks exploring Indigenous perspectives for different audiences (storytelling for preschoolers, guided walks for all ages and some open only to adults). Special requests for this program continue to be popular with many organizations booking a program as part of their staff development or Reconciliation journey. The Indigenous cultural programmer ensures there is cultural content at each drop-in event and is also working with Royal Roads University and several First Nations organizations to plan the National Indigenous Peoples Day event at Royal Roads.

CONCLUSION

Outreach, education and compliance are crucial to ensuring visitor safety, fostering cultural appreciation and preserving the ecological integrity of regional parks. During the summer of 2025, staff will remain flexible and responsive to the evolving needs of park management and visitor dynamics. The park ranger and interpretation teams play an essential role in meeting visitor expectations and cultivating an accessible, welcoming atmosphere. Both programs are founded on proven practices and continue to adapt, delivering exceptional service to communities across the region.

RECOMMENDATION

There is no recommendation. This report is for information only.

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ATTACHMENT

Presentation: CRD Regional Parks & Trails 2025 Summer Outreach and Education Overview