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the pathway

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FOR REGIONAL PARKS AND TRAILS
MANAGEMENT PLANNING

“Guidance for regional park management requires formal plans that clearly state goals, objectives, and standards and prescribe specific actions necessary for meeting those objectives and standards.”

CRD Regional Parks Management Planning

INTRODUCTION

The CRD Parks Master Plan (Master Plan) sets out broad strategic goals for regional parks. It is system-wide in scope and provides the vision and purpose of CRD Parks. The Plan establishes a framework for managing regional parks and trails through the creation of park management plans.

Park management plans describe goals, objectives, and actions for protecting the natural environment and cultural features in a regional park or regional trail. The plan also identifies the types of permitted outdoor recreation uses and where they will be allowed, the types and locations of park facilities, and types of services. Lack of a plan leaves parks without management direction. This can negatively affect the protection of natural and cultural features, visitor services, facilities management, and budgeting.

Until now, CRD Parks has not had a defined process for preparing park management plans. Although the general process and goals for park management planning is presented in the Master Plan, the specific process for preparing individual park management plans has been defined in the terms of reference for each planning project. Although this provided guidance for individual planning processes, there was no over riding specific policy about park management planning. At its June 1, 2005 meeting, the Parks Committee approved a Terms of Reference (TOR) for conducting a review of the park management planning process including:

- reviewing how other agencies conduct their planning processes
- consulting with municipal, provincial, and federal parks and planning staff
- consulting with the Parks Committee to ensure that the plans meet the committee’s needs and
- consulting with the staff of CRD Parks

The Parks Committee also directed staff to report back with the results of the review and provide recommendations for a new planning process that would:

- be within the staff and financial resources of CRD Parks
- meet professional planning values
- reach for excellence in planning, and
- be efficient, effective and inclusive

The park management planning process review is now complete. CRD Parks has developed a planning process that meets the required criteria and incorporates the results of the consultation process and other agency best practices. This document highlights the key features of the recommended CRD Parks management planning process. It gives an overview of the context for and logic of park management planning and describes the planning process model, park management zones, and the framework for the planning document.

Context of Regional Parks Management Planning

NEED FOR PARK PLANNING

Guidance for regional park and trail management requires formal plans that clearly state goals, objectives, and standards and that prescribe specific actions necessary for meeting those objectives and standards. The park management plan translates the more general direction of the CRD Parks Master Plan into direction that guides management of individual parks and trails.

Through planning, managers can reconcile differences in management philosophy and ideas before taking actions that have long-range effects on the park resource. Good plans have a stabilizing influence on management. Consistent outcomes in park management depend on plans that establish clear, attainable, measurable, and acceptable objectives and standards for a park and the actions involved in pursuing such objectives. In the coming decades, successful park management will depend a great deal on the quality of plans that guide management actions.

LINKS WITH OTHER PLANS

Park management plans comprise only one part of an agency’s strategy for managing park systems. They roll out of strategic plans that define the overall agency mandate, purpose, vision, and focus. They

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also spur the development of implementation or action plans. Implementation plans describe methods for achieving objectives in the park management plan, whereas park management plans describe the basic management philosophy for the entire park unit and provide strategies for addressing issues and achieving management objectives for a ten-year period.

PLANNING VALUES

The Canadian Institute of Planners (CIP) has adopted a set of values that provides a useful foundation for CRD Parks planning. The values of the CIP are based on the assumption that planners work for the public good; that planning includes a concern for equity, efficiency, and a respect for the land as a community resource; and that planning contributes to the conservation of natural and cultural heritage, promotes healthy communities, and improves the quality of life for all people. In order to achieve excellence in planning, CRD Parks has embedded its management planning process within these core values.

PLANNING PRINCIPLES

In addition to the above set of core values, CRD Parks will adhere to the following set of planning principles:

- Procedural fairness
- Consultation before action
- Access to information
- Systematic procedure
- Plans address issues
- Plans are science-based
- Defined decision-making authority
- Responsive to changing conditions

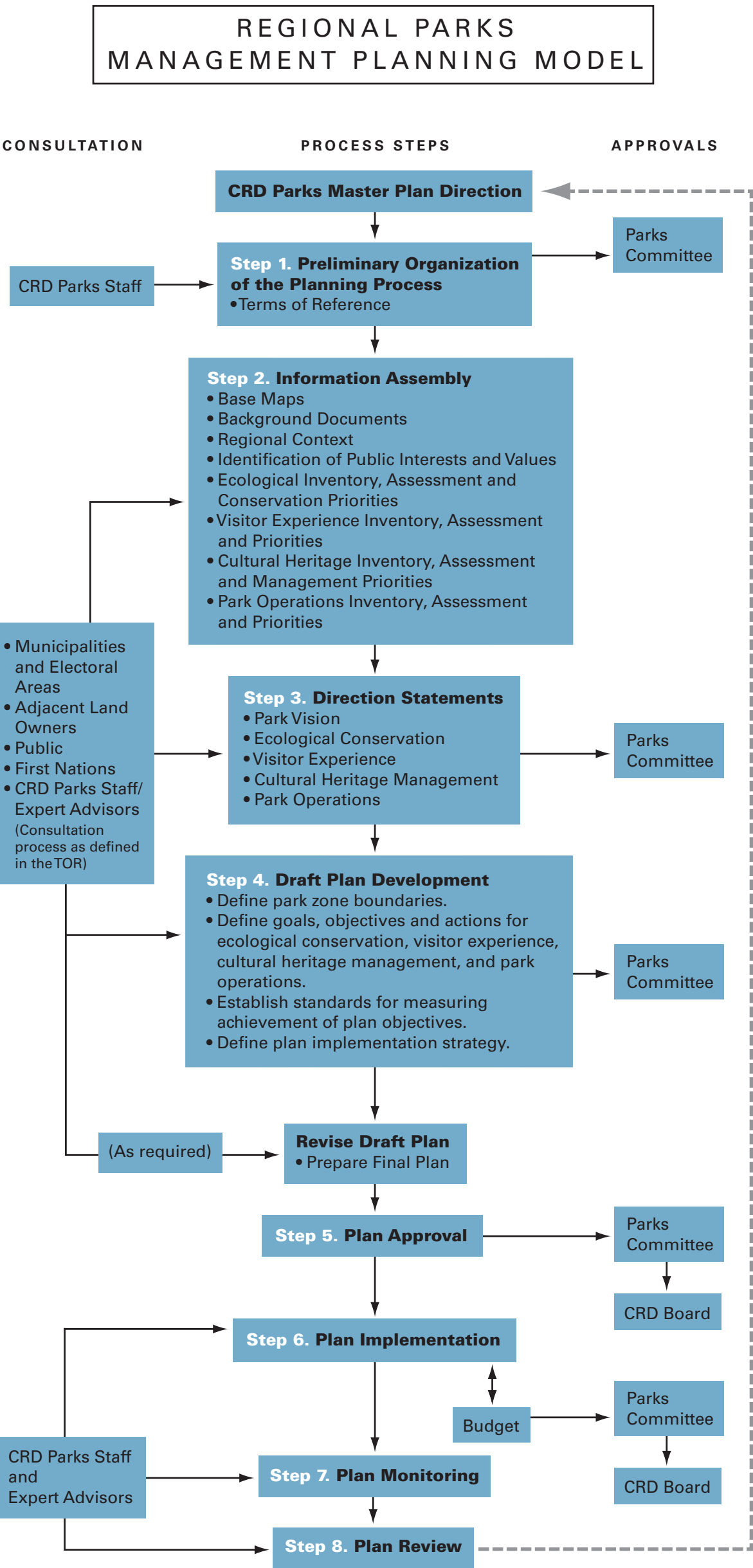
These planning principles provide the foundation for the development of consistent and useful park management plans that are in line with the overall purposes of the regional park system.

CONSULTATION

Consultation is especially important for the management of regional parks and trails. If park management plans are to have credibility and acceptance, the public must have an opportunity to help formulate these documents. Involving the public is an integral part of the CRD's park management plan decision-making process.

FIRST NATION PARTICIPATION

CRD Parks encourages First Nations participation in its management planning processes to ensure that decisions are sensitive to aboriginal interests. It is important for CRD Parks to participate in meaningful consultation and address First Nations interests in its regional parks and trails when CRD Parks planning processes affect these interests. One of the best ways to accomplish this goal is to build solid, lasting, respectful, and mutually beneficial relationships with First Nations.



Photographs (L to R):
Sooke Hills; On top of
Mt. Manuel Quimper



Regional Parks Management Planning Process

CRD Parks is adopting a park management planning process based on three main activity streams: (1) consultation; (2) process steps; and (3) approvals. The CRD Parks Management Planning Model on page 2 highlights these activity streams. The Planning Model illustrates how the CRD will conduct the process of park management planning and incorporates the principle of flexibility as fundamental in designing a planning process. The principle of flexibility exists to adjust planning and public involvement procedures to suit specific situations and the requirements of various planning participants.

Each project’s Terms of Reference (TOR) defines the scope of consultation. Consultation can range from simply informing the public about the planning process to full collaboration with the public in the decision-making process. Consultation may include the creation of an advisory committee. The project’s TOR defines the advisory committee’s selection process and decision-making authority and requires the approval of the Parks Committee. Municipalities and Electoral Areas in which the

park or trail is located will be directly involved throughout the consultation process.

First Nations consultation is important to the management planning process. The planning project’s TOR will define how CRD Parks and First Nations will work together on the park management plan.

Planning projects involve CRD staff and may involve outside consultants. The project’s TOR defines the nature and scope of this participation. For each project, CRD Parks will put together a core project management team and a technical team. These teams provide supervision and advice throughout the planning process and during the implementation of the plan. CRD Parks may also hire expert advisors to provide professional advice and services as required.

Consideration and approval by the Parks Committee and CRD Board is an integral component of the planning process. There are key stages in each planning process that require Committee or Board approval. The Parks Committee must approve the project’s TOR, direction statements, draft plan, final plan, and

budget. The CRD Board approves the final plan and budget when recommended by the Parks Committee.

Although the steps in the planning process follow a logical sequence, the planning group may undertake a number of activities concurrently depending upon the nature of the project.

WHAT’S KEY?

CRD Parks’ planning process is distinctive in at least four fundamental ways:

- More time is spent up-front collecting information and establishing park management priorities based on science
- The public consultation process is customized to fit each planning situation in the recognition that every planning situation is unique
- Once background information and priorities have been established through consultation, the planner sets to the task of preparing the plan
- Plan implementation is built into the planning process to ensure that plan implementation is timely and efficient

Regional Parks Management Zone Guidelines

The CRD Parks Master Plan sets out the general management direction for each regional park through park classifications. Providing more precise land management for particular areas within a park requires more detailed reviews of different areas that take into account specific environmental needs and unique features. A specific park management unit, or park management “zone,” may include regional parks with natural areas that have common ecological factors. Zones define which activities the park or trail can accommodate and what type of visitor experience the management of the zone aims to provide.

Management Zones	Objectives	Environmental Values	Visitor Experience and Activities	Typical Infrastructure
Environmental Protection Zone	• To protect ecologically significant areas within regional parks through long term science-based land stewardship	• Areas with rare or endangered species and ecosystems needing the highest degree of ecological protection • In some areas, visitor access may be restricted.	• Nature study • Environmental interpretation • Visitor experience is centered around appreciation of natural features.	• Low-impact nature trails and other infrastructure that enhance appreciation of the natural feature(s)
Cultural Heritage Protection Zone	• To protect culturally significant areas and features through a long term cultural resource management strategy	• Ecological features associated with culturally significant sites may be protected as part of the culturally significant features of the park or trail (e.g. heritage orchards)	• Cultural appreciation and interpretation • Historical appreciation • Visitor experience is one of appreciating and understanding the cultural context of the feature	• Low-impact nature trails and other infrastructure that enhance appreciation of the cultural feature(s)
Regional Wilderness Zone	• To keep large natural systems functioning and provide a regional wilderness experience for park visitors	• Contiguous land areas large enough to protect the natural values • Areas with outstanding natural features that create a memorable visitor experience • Ecosystems are functioning in a sustainable fashion	• Activities dispersed over a wide area • Some backcountry areas could be available for hiking, cycling, and horseback riding • Visitor experience is one of being in a wilderness setting • Backcountry camping may be permitted	• Long distance hiking, equestrian and cycling trails • Trails to viewpoints
Natural Environment Zone	• To provide easily-accessible natural areas within the parks • To provide areas within the parks that can be used for more active recreational pursuits	• Areas where outdoor activities take place in conjunction with protection of natural features • Less remote than wilderness • Can act as a buffer between wilderness and recreation zones	• Activities less dispersed than in a wilderness zone, and more accessible to visitors • Horseback riding, cycling and hiking, shoreline activities • Visitor experience is one of participating in outdoor activities in a natural setting.	• Hiking, walking, equestrian and cycling trails • Viewpoints • Pathways • Picnic areas • Open fields
Outdoor Recreation Zone	• To provide areas within a regional park that can accommodate concentrated recreation use	• Outstanding recreation features • Natural values may be compromised to allow higher level of activity	• Activities more concentrated-e.g., beach activities, swimming, boating, fishing, picnicking, multi-use trails, group picnic areas • Visitor experience includes active participation in outdoor recreation activities	• Change rooms • Concessions, • Boat launch sites • Beaches • Group picnic shelters • Nature houses
Park Services Zone	• To provide areas within a park needed to support park services	• Natural values secondary to park service needs • Considerable landscape modification allowed	• Visitor-oriented and park operation services	• Parking lots • Storage areas • Washroom buildings • Park operations buildings

Writing the Plan

GOAL-ACHIEVEMENT FRAMEWORK

CRD Parks has adopted a goal-achievement framework for park management. This framework emphasizes planning as a process for making decisions that will enable management to achieve clearly stated goals and objectives. Goals and objectives serve two purposes within a plan: (1) they are criteria for determining what management policies and actions are necessary, and (2) they are the targets against which to measure the effectiveness of park management.

The goal-achievement framework that CRD Parks has adopted for organizing and writing park management plans is a framework that supports a management-by-objectives approach. It features clear statements of goals and objectives followed by the management actions needed to achieve them.

PLANNING LOGIC AND TERMINOLOGY

Regional parks and trails management planning incorporates basic planning concepts. These concepts provide a terminology for discussing the direction of management, from goals and objectives to specific actions. The relationship among the components of the framework—the planning logic—is important; for example, planned actions are the means of pursuing goals and objectives. The planning concepts are as follows:

Goals are general portraits of ideal ends or effects. They limit the range of potential objectives by providing direction and purpose. Goals are often lofty statements of intent.

Objectives are attainable in the short-term and are more specific than goals. The goals shape the objectives. Clearly stated objectives are the key to effective park management plans.

Actions are specific management policies and practices used to achieve objectives within the constraints of agency policy and regulations.

Policies are explicit expressions of intent that describe what management will do to attain objectives. Sometimes a policy describes what management will not do or otherwise prescribes constraints on management activity.

Standards are measurable statements—based on the objectives—that define minimally acceptable conditions. They serve as reference points that can trigger corrective management actions if conditions are not acceptable.

Most of the substantive content of CRD Regional Parks management plans will consist of goals and objectives and associated actions to achieve these objectives.

Regional Parks Management Plan Template

CRD Parks has developed a template for writing park management plans. The intent of the template is to serve as a basis for preparing park management plans while retaining enough flexibility to adapt to the needs of a particular planning project.

As much as possible, planners will follow the template in order to make CRD Parks management plans comparable and ensure that each plan includes core information necessary to provide management direction.

MANAGEMENT PLAN TEMPLATE

Introduction

- 1. Introduction – provides a brief description of the plan area, the purpose for undertaking the plan, and the organization of the plan.

Background

- 2. Relationship to the Regional Parks and Trails System – states how the park or trail fits into the overall system.
 - 2.1. Role of the Park or Trail – describes the role of the park within the regional system.
 - 2.2. Park Classification – defines the park classification according to criteria set out in the CRD Parks Master Plan.
- 3. Background Information – provides necessary background information on the history of the park, ecological values, visitor use, cultural resources, regional context, demographics, and other information that may affect the park.
- 4. Consultation – describes the consultation process.
- 5. First Nations Consultation – describes the process for consultation with First Nations and any agreements or Memorandums of Understanding (MOU) with First Nations.
- 6. Links to Other Plans – states how this park management plan links to other CRD Parks plans, including the Master Plan, conservation plan, infrastructure plan, communications plan, universal access plan, interpretive plan, and volunteer services plan. It may also link this plan to outside management plans prepared by other agencies.

The Plan

- 7. Park Direction Statements – defines the management direction for ecological conservation, visitor experience, cultural heritage management, and park operations.
- 8. Park Vision – defines the vision for the park.

- 9. Planning Principles – lists the principles used to guide the planning process.
- 10. Park Zoning – provides a description and map of park zones.
- 11. Management Goals, Objectives, Actions, Policies, and Standards – the bulk of the planning document. Defines management goals, objectives, actions, policies, and standards for the following major areas.
 - 11.1. Ecological Conservation
 - 11.2. Cultural Heritage Management
 - 11.3. Visitor Experience
 - 11.3.1. Visitor Experiences and Activities
 - 11.3.2. Visitor Services
 - 11.3.3. Communications
 - 11.4. Park Operations
 - 11.4.1. Park Infrastructure
 - 11.4.2. Park Maintenance and Development
 - 11.4.3. Other Operational Issues

Plan Implementation, Monitoring, and Review

- 12. Plan Implementation – describes the plan’s implementation strategy.
- 13. Plan Monitoring and Evaluation – describes the plan’s monitoring and evaluation strategy.
- 14. Plan Review – describes the method and time frame for reviewing the plan.

Summary

The vision of Regional Parks is to protect our natural environment while giving us the means to remain in close touch with nature. Regional Parks will continue to serve as a leading advocate for the protection of the region’s green and blue spaces, fostering in all of us a better understanding of nature, our place in the natural environment, and a healthy lifestyle through outdoor experiences and activities.