

# Matthews Point Regional Park Management Plan

## Initial Public Participation Report



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Capital Regional District | January 2017

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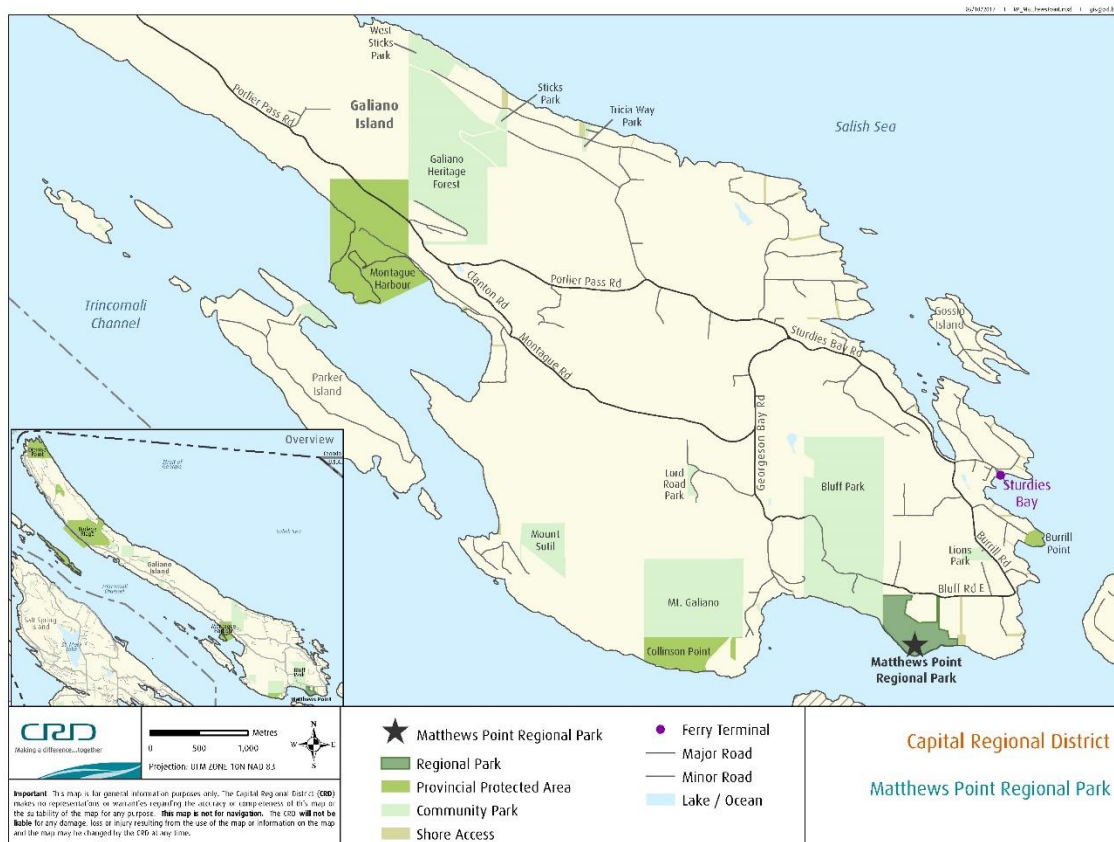


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Cover Photo: View across Active Pass

## Executive Summary

The Matthews Point Regional Park management planning project was initiated by the Capital Regional District (CRD) Board in October 2017. An initial round of public engagement was held between mid-October and early December 2017 to gather information and ideas to help develop the draft plan. The following report summarizes this initial engagement process and the input received.

The public engagement process included opportunities for involvement from First Nations and the public. Penelakut First Nation, Cowichan Tribes, and the W\_ SÁNEĆ Nations (Tsawout, Tseycum, Tsartlip and Pauquachin) were each invited to participate in this project. Cowichan Tribes accepted the invitation and a meeting was held with Cowichan staff and an Elder to discuss the project and receive input directly. The W\_ SÁNEĆ and Penelakut First Nation were not interested in participating at this time.

The public were invited to provide input through a comment form on the CRD website or through an open house held on Galiano Island in November 2017. Letters, notifying people of the project and the open house were sent to park neighbours and to the organizations that manage the park and trail on either side of Matthews Point Regional Park. Twenty people attended the open house. Nineteen on-line comment forms were received. CRD staff also had a telephone conversation with a member of the executive of the Galiano Club, owner/manager of the adjacent Bluff Park.

Representatives from Habitat Acquisition Trust and The Land Conservancy, the two organizations that jointly hold a conservation covenant on the park, met with staff to discuss their interests, potential goals, and issues.

Highlights and key messages heard through this round of engagement included:

- Keep it natural.
- A key goal should be protecting nature, habitat and wildlife.
- A desire to maintain or improve safety for users, given that there are cliffs and steep trail areas in the park.
- A desire to address invasive species and erosion on and adjacent to the park.
- Hiking and horseback riding should be continued in the park.
- Hiking, walking a dog and viewing nature were the activities noted as most likely to be undertaken on-site.
- The need for links to Bluff Park and Matthews Shore Access trail/beach were suggested by many.

## Purpose of this Report

The purpose of this report is to describe the initial public participation process for the development of the management plan and to summarize the responses received.

## The Public Engagement Process

A *media release*, announcing that the CRD was initiating planning for Matthews Point Regional Park, was issued following the October 2017 CRD Board meeting.

A *project webpage* was posted on the CRD website in October 2017. It provides information about the park and about the planning process. A comment form on the webpage sought local knowledge about the site, opinions about what the main management goals should be, and information about how people use or are likely to use the park, what activities should be permitted, use of adjacent park/trail opportunities, and issues that should be addressed through the management plan. The comment form was available on the CRD website between October 14 and December 2, 2017.

Information about the open house was also available on the webpage.

*Signs* were installed at the park in October to alert park users about the project, how they could get more information, and how to provide input.

A drop-in *open house* was held at the Lions Hall on Galiano Island on November 18, 2017. Posters highlighting the date, time and location of the open house were provided to three local organizations to distribute and to post on-island. An ad was also placed in the Galiano Active Page and in Black Press papers in Greater Victoria. At the open house, display boards provided park information and maps and posed questions to the public. Staff were available to discuss the project and the public's responses to the various questions. Comment forms could be filled in at the open house or on-line. Twenty participants attended the open house.

*Letters* were sent to six First Nations, providing information about the project, inviting their involvement in the planning process, and offering a presentation/meeting if desired. At the request of the Cowichan Tribes, a meeting was held with staff and an Elder in early December to gather traditional knowledge and gain greater understanding about Cowichan Tribes' on-going interests in this part of their traditional territory.

In November, a *meeting* was held with representatives of Habitat Acquisition Trust and The Land Conservancy of BC as these two organizations jointly hold a conservation covenant on the park lands.



The intent of the covenant is to ensure the land is only used for regional park purposes and that it is managed with a focus on nature conservation. The covenant holders provided initial ideas and suggestions for consideration in developing the management plan, based on their knowledge of the park through annual monitoring of the park and conservation covenant requirements.



View of Matthews Point from Active Pass

## Summary of What We Heard

### First Nations

The Wsanec Nations and Penelakut First Nation chose not to participate in this initial phase of the management planning process. The Cowichan Tribes actively participated and provided considerable information about their traditional territory and their activities on Galiano Island, nearby islands, the park lands, and in the adjacent waters. The issue of potential presence of archaeological features was raised and the importance of working with First Nations should archaeological features be found in the park was noted.

## Public

Through the public engagement process, some very good information was provided about the park and the respondents' desires for the park. Some of the points made include:

- Horses have been ridden in the park since it was established. The main path was hard to locate until equestrian traffic refined it, creating a more enjoyable walking experience.
- This park contains some of the few remaining first growth trees on the island, including a three hundred year old Arbutus tree.
- There is one parcel of land that should be considered for acquisition – it connects Bluff Park and Matthews Point park.
- Leave as much of it alone as possible/Keep it natural.
- Invasives such as broom, gorse, and spurge laurel should be addressed.
- Provide adequate parking and better define where car access is allowed/not allowed.

Seventy-nine percent of respondents noted that Matthews Point would be a primary destination for them. When asked if they would visit other areas during their trip, 84% (16 people) indicated they would also go to the Matthews Shore Access and 74% (14 people) said they would also go to Bluff Park during a trip to Matthews Point. Fifty percent of respondents indicated they would access the park by foot, while 35% indicated they would drive to the park. Ten percent indicated they would ride a horse to the park and 5% would arrive by bike.

In terms of activities that should be permitted, recognizing the Natural Area classification of the park, the top four were:

- Hiking/walking (89%)
- Viewing nature (32%)
- Horseback riding (21%)
- Picnicking (21%)

When asked about issues in the park that should be addressed through the management plan, the following themes/needs were noted:

- Need to keep the park accessible for horses and dogs and preclude motorized vehicles (dirt bikes, quads)
- Need for the power poles and shed to be removed from the park
- Need for invasive species management
- Need to keep the park natural and not change/over-develop it

- Need to regulate vehicle access and provide parking
- Need to have trail connection to Bluff Park and to the beach
- Need for increased maintenance (of tree blow down, steep trail areas, cliff edge visibility)

## Covenant Holders

The covenant holders raised various points for consideration in developing the management plan. In particular, they expressed a desire to conduct a baseline inventory of the park to gain a better understanding of the communities, species, rare plants and invasives that exist on-site. They suggested that consideration should be given to restoration and clearing invasives (broom, non-native grasses and rose campion) in key areas along the trails. With respect to visitor use, the covenant holders felt that, in line with the need to focus management on nature conservation, no new trails should be developed, although there was agreement that consolidating trails that link to the beach/shore access trail and developing a link to Bluff Park was appropriate. They suggested that some trail spurs and informal paths could be decommissioned and revegetated. With respect to appropriate use, the covenant holders did not recommend allowing mountain biking in the park, and did not recommend encouraging horseback riding, although they did not see or anticipate a significant impact from existing horse use in the park. Hiking was felt to be appropriate, though some trail modifications and maintenance were noted as being needed.

## Conclusion

Approximately 25 people (public, First Nations representatives, covenant holders, and local groups) were directly engaged and provided initial thoughts and ideas through this participation process. The members of the public who participated demonstrated that they are knowledgeable about the park, are interested in the park's management, and are willing to take an active role in this management planning process. All comments received will be considered, and incorporated as appropriate, as a draft management plan is being prepared. When a draft plan is completed, a subsequent round of public engagement will occur to obtain input prior to finalizing the management plan.