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REPORT TO REGIONAL PARKS COMMITTEE MEETING OF WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 21, 2018

SUBJECT **Gulf Islands Regional Trails Plan**

ISSUE

To consider approval of the final Gulf Islands Regional Trails Plan.

BACKGROUND

In February 2017, the Regional Parks Committee approved the project scope for the Gulf Island Regional Trails Plan (GIRTP). An initial round of participation was initiated in March 2017 to gather ideas from the public and First Nations to assist in developing the plan. A Public and First Nations Participation Report was provided to the Regional Parks Committee in June 2017 for information.

In July 2017, the Capital Regional District (CRD) Board approved the release of the draft plan for public review and comment. A second round of public participation was held between July and the end of September 2017 seeking comments on the draft plan. The draft plan was referred to potentially affected First Nations and government agencies and was posted, along with a comment form, on the CRD website for public review and comment. Five public information sessions were held in the Gulf Islands in August and September 2017.

Based on comments received, there was a high level of support for the draft GIRTP. A Public Participation Report is included as Attachment 1.

Substantive changes made to the GIRTP based on input received on the draft plan in 2017 include:

1. Additional strategic context was added to explain the role of Regional Parks and to provide a link to CRD Board priorities.
2. Two additional policies were added:
 - trails are for bicycle/pedestrian use; and
 - in accordance with the Regional Trails Management Plan (2016), pets are required to be on-leash on regional trails for safety.
3. One policy was expanded to indicate that the CRD will consider, during the detailed design stage, opportunities for local groups to salvage native plants before trail construction begins.
4. The general introduction to the regional trail routes section was expanded to note that local organizations may want to build other trails to link to the regional trail in order to expand the trail network and link to other local facilities/attractions, such as schools and other parks.

5. Notations about the routes on three islands changed to address comments received, including:
 - the possible inclusion of Ganges Hill in the initial trail segment on Salt Spring Island, subject to Salt Spring Island Transportation Commission developing this section of trail;
 - consideration of alternatives in the Einar's Hill area on North Pender Island during the detailed design stage; and
 - further consultation on Saturna Island before any extension to Narvaez Bay is initiated.
6. An additional appendix was added describing linkages between the GIRTP and the Regional Trails Management Plan.

The finalized Gulf Islands Regional Trails Plan is attached (Attachment 2).

ALTERNATIVES

Alternative 1

That the Regional Parks Committee recommend to the CRD Board:

That the Gulf Islands Regional Trails Plan be approved.

Alternative 2

That the Gulf Islands Regional Trails Plan be referred back to staff with direction.

SOCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Building regional trails on the Gulf Islands will be beneficial for both local residents and visitors to the islands. The plan identifies conceptual regional trail routes that will connect people to key BC ferry terminals and to various regional destinations such as national, provincial and regional parks and community commercial hubs. The regional trails will provide a key arterial route to which other local trails can connect and will facilitate active lifestyles.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

Potential environmental impacts from trail development will be addressed during the detailed design phase for each trail. Developing regional trails on the Gulf Islands will help achieve CRD Board priorities relating to climate change by facilitation of active recreation and transportation opportunities.

ECONOMIC IMPLICATIONS

The GIRTP conceptually identifies 50 km of new regional trails to be developed over time. Costs for each trail will be determined through the detailed design stage based on engineering requirements. The GIRTP proposes a phased approach, with initial segments being developed on each island ranging between 2 km - 5 km in length; totaling approximately 17 km.

It will take many years to fully implement this plan and external funding will be needed in addition to CRD funding to complete the proposed trails. Budgets for each trail segment will be brought before the Regional Parks Committee as part of the annual CRD capital planning process.

INTERGOVERNMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

This plan has been developed with input from several First Nations, key CRD Commissions on the islands, Islands Trust, BC Parks, and the Ministry of Transportation & Infrastructure. The Plan includes direction regarding how the CRD will work together with others to achieve mutual interests.

CONCLUSION

In February 2017, the Regional Parks Committee approved a process to develop a Regional Trails Plan for the Gulf Islands. Two rounds of public participation were held and discussions with several First Nations and other government agencies took place. Consideration has been given to all comments received through the planning process and the final recommended plan is attached.

RECOMMENDATION

That the Regional Parks Committee recommend to the Capital Regional District Board:

That the Gulf Islands Regional Trails Plan be approved.

Submitted by:	Mike Walton, PhD, Senior Manager, Regional Parks
Concurrence:	Larisa Hutcheson, P.Eng., General Manager, Parks & Environmental Services
Concurrence:	Robert Lapham, MCIP, RPP, Chief Administrative Officer

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Attachments: Attachment 1 – Public Participation Report
Attachment 2 – Gulf Islands Regional Trails Plan