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

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### **SUBJECT     2017 Regional Parks and Trails Resident Survey**

### **ISSUE**

To provide information about the outcomes of the 2017 Regional Parks and Trails Resident Survey.

### **BACKGROUND**

Staff initiated a resident survey in the late fall of 2016 to gather up-to-date information and monitor public attitudes about the Capital Regional District's (CRD) regional park system. Data was collected until January 2017 and analyzed throughout the year. The CRD Regional Parks Service Resident Survey report was finalized in early 2018.

A total of 1,245 participants, equal to 27% of the 5,000 households randomly selected, participated in the survey. The data are statistically valid, with a 95% confidence level of being representative of the whole of the capital region.

The survey report documents the input received from participants (Attachment 1). The report offers an in-depth analysis of the opinions and suggestions provided by respondents regarding values, benefits, use pattern, satisfaction, management, and funding of CRD's regional parks and trails. A fact sheet to highlight key results accompanies the report (Attachment 2).

### **SOCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

The survey confirmed that regional parks and trails are popular destinations, with 93% of participants reporting they had visited a regional park and 84% that they had visited a regional trail in the past 12 months. More than half of the participants (52%) were frequent visitors, using the parks and trails system more than 10 times a year.

The most visited places were the Galloping Goose Regional Trail, Elk/Beaver Lake Regional Park and Lochside Regional Trail. This matches the visitation data that is collected each year for all the parks and trails.

The top five reasons why people visited a regional park or trail were: walking (low intensity), hiking (higher intensity, rough terrain), viewing nature, dog walking and bird watching. The top reasons why people did not visit were: meeting dogs off-leash, too far from home, not enough time, feeling unsafe, and too many cyclists.

Regarding dog walking, 38% said that they visit with a dog, 35% said they did not visit with a dog, 21% did not respond to that question and 7% did not own a dog.

Survey responses indicated that participants have strong conservation values. They also support outdoor recreation, as long as it does not adversely impact conservation.

Most participants are satisfied (85%) with their experience in regional parks and trails and positively rate the contribution of the parks and trails system as good to excellent for outdoor recreation (75%), natural environments and species conservation (75%), and the health of the region (84%).

A list of park management activities was provided. Participants were asked to rate the three that should be given priority over the next five years to enhance their enjoyment of regional parks and trails. The top priorities were repair and maintain existing facilities, undertake restoration projects to conserve natural environments and species, and acquire more parkland. Over half (55%) of participants supported an increase in funding to operate regional parks and trails and 70% were in favour of extending the Regional Parks Land Acquisition Fund for another 10 years.

The high level of support for extending the Land Acquisition Fund to expand the regional parks system likely comes with the assumptions that sufficient funding will be made available to open up the new parks, in addition to increasing funding to repair and maintain facilities. While the survey did not attempt to quantify how much more people would be prepared to pay for increased operation and maintenance work, as the amount of land increases, infrastructure ages and there is more wear and tear from increased use, operating and maintenance costs can be expected to significantly exceed inflation. The survey also indicates that the popularity and use of regional parks should be expected to grow and there will be demands for more services such as expanded trail systems and larger parking lots.

## **CONCLUSION**

The 2017 survey allowed for collection of up-to-date information about residents' use of regional parks and trails and satisfaction, and their opinions about priorities for conservation and recreation, and funding priorities. The survey results will help guide staff in planning for the future and adjusting delivery of services. With the popularity and recognition of the valuable contribution that regional parks make to the health of the region and its residents and visitors, it is clear to staff that the current funding model for Regional Parks is not sustainable if new parks are to be opened and current service levels are proposed to be maintained. With the high level of support to continue the Land Acquisition Fund and acquire more land, new parks might need to remain land-banked and undeveloped in order to work within normal expectations for budget increases.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

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

That the Regional Parks and Trails Resident Survey staff report be received for information.

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Concurrence:	Robert Lapham, MCIP, RPP, Chief Administrative Officer

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Attachments: Attachment 1 – CRD Regional Parks Service Resident Survey 2017  
Attachment 2 – Resident Survey Fact Sheet  
Attachment 3 – Presentation