

2018 to 2019 REGIONAL PARKS LAND ACQUISITION CRITERIA

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this Appendix is to provide criteria¹ that will:

- guide and assist Regional Parks in assessing the acquisition of individual parcels based on the acquisition priorities identified in the Regional Parks Land Acquisition Strategy; and
- be the basis for making recommendations to the CRD Board about the exact area of a legally described parcel that should be acquired.

Regional Park Significance

The concept of regional park significance plays a fundamental role in acquiring land for regional parks and identifying an area as having regional park potential. Regionally significant areas for regional park purposes are natural areas that represent examples of the diverse geography and environments in the context of the entire region. These areas also provide opportunities for residents to connect with nature and they will attract people from throughout the region.

LAND ACQUISITION CRITERIA

Regional Parks

The regional park land acquisition criteria are organized around three categories: (1) environmental; (2) outdoor experiences and activities; and (3) management and planning.

For an area to be recommended for acquisition it must be considered to have regional park significance in the environmental category. An exception to this may be made where an acquisition serves important operational or land management needs. For example, an acquisition may provide a logical and more manageable park boundary, link properties or eliminate an operational problem such as poor access, thus reducing costs.

The criteria will be rated on a five-point scale: 1=Very Low, 2=Low, 3=Moderate, 4=High, 5=Very High. Regional Parks recognizes that the allocation of scores will be subjective but will be based on the best available information. A composite score will be produced for each category. These three scores will be added to provide an overall score for the area. A descriptive narrative will be substituted for numerical scores when assessing the criteria in the category management and planning.

¹ Criteria means a measure that will be used to judge what portion of a specific legal parcel of land will be acquired for a regional park or trail.

Environmental Criteria

1. Representativeness. How well does the proposed area represent the natural environment of the region and specific ecosystems elements as defined in the Regional Parks Strategic Plan?
2. Uniqueness. Is the natural environment of the area distinctive or unique compared with other areas in the capital region? Does the area contain features not already protected within other similar sites?
3. Connectivity. Does the area play an important role in connecting with natural environments and protected areas? Does the area serve to complete an established park? Is the area adjacent to existing protected lands?
4. Environmental Function. Does the area play an important role and function in the broader ecosystem (e.g., wildlife corridors, critical habitat, migration, watershed management, ground water recharge, and flood control and storm water prevention)?
5. Level of Fragmentation. Has disturbance caused this area to become fragmented from adjacent ecosystems?
6. Naturalness. Is there a low relative amount of human-caused disturbance to the natural environment? What type of natural disturbance has occurred and how long ago? How many introduced species are present? Are the introduced species dominating, out competing and/or displacing the native species? Is there potential for the ecosystem to recover through active or passive management?
7. Viability. Are there good long-term prospects for the continued existence of the area's natural features? Can the area be managed in such a way as to maintain ecosystem process?
8. Habitat Value. Are there important habitat values for native plants and animals?
9. Distinct Environmental Features. Does the area contain significant environmental features that illustrate specific land evolution processes or landforms?
10. Biological Diversity. Is there high biological diversity of the proposed area? Is there a high diversity of natural communities?
11. Species Conservation Value. Does the area contain rare, threatened or endangered plants, animals and ecosystems? Are there global, national, provincial, regional and local conservation values?
12. Climate Change. What role could the property have to address climate change mitigation and adaptation?

Connecting People with Nature – Outdoor Experiences and Activities Criteria

The regional park significance of an area for outdoor experiences and activities will be assessed by:

1. examining the attributes of an area that will attract residents of the region; and
2. the opportunities an area offers for outdoor activities. The assessment of an area will also identify environmental features that could limit outdoor activities. These limitations will be discussed as part of the assessment of outdoor activities for an area.

Area Attributes

1. Environmental Features. Do the natural features of the landscape provide regionally significant opportunities for outdoor experiences and activities? Do the features provide an opportunity for people to be close to nature?

2. Cultural/Historic Features. Are there regionally significant cultural and historic features relating to First Nations and European/pioneer settlement?
3. Uniqueness. Are there opportunities for distinctive outdoor experiences and activities?
4. Connectivity. Can the area connect with other outdoor recreational features, opportunities on adjacent lands or the regional trail system?
5. Viewing Opportunities. What are the opportunities for people to view the surrounding landscape, natural features and wildlife?

Outdoor Activity and Experience Opportunities

1. What outdoor activities and visitor experiences could be provided?
2. Accessibility. How accessible is the area in terms of distance from people in the capital region? What are the activity and experience opportunities for people with disabilities?
3. Opportunities for Environmental Interpretation. What are the opportunities for environmental interpretation?

Management and Planning Criteria

1. Municipal Planning. What is the Official Community Plan, Local Area Plan, zoning and Park and Recreation Plan designations for the area? How do these municipal land use planning tools relate to natural environment protection and park establishment?
2. Development Proposals. What kind of development is proposed for the area? How would it affect regional park values? Are any parts of the area proposed to be protected or designated as a park?
3. Regional Growth Strategy/Draft Regional Sustainability Strategy. How does the area relate to the Regional Growth Strategy and draft Regional Sustainability Strategy?
4. Federal, Provincial, Islands Trust and Municipal Park Planning and Conservation Initiatives. How does the area relate to park planning initiatives by federal, provincial, Islands Trust and municipal park planning and conservation initiatives? Are there any partnership opportunities?
5. Conservation Initiatives by National, Provincial and Local Conservation Groups. How does the area relate to conservation initiatives by national, provincial and local conservation groups? Are there any partnership opportunities?

LAND ACQUISITION CRITERIA

Regional Trails

An area under consideration for acquisition for a regional trail will be assessed on the following criteria:

1. Connectivity. Does the proposed area connect regional parks and other parks and public lands?
2. Visitor experience. What type of visitor trail experiences does the land provide?
3. Active transportation. How does the acquisition contribute to active transportation and regional trails as transportation corridors?
4. Linking with other trails. What are the trail links that this acquisition will address and provide?
5. Natural area corridors. How does this acquisition contribute to protecting and establishing a natural area corridor?

6. Connect natural areas. How does this acquisition contribute to connecting natural areas? What ecosystems and species would be protected by this acquisition?
7. Municipal Planning. What is the Official Community Plan, Local Area Plan, zoning and Park and Recreation Plan designations for the area?
8. Regional Growth Strategy/Draft Regional Sustainability Strategy. How does the area relate to the Regional Growth Strategy and draft Regional Sustainability Strategy?
9. Partnerships. Federal, Provincial, Islands Trust and Municipal Park Planning and Conservation Initiatives. How does the area relate to trail planning initiatives by federal, provincial, Islands Trust and municipal park planning and conservation initiatives? Are there any partnership opportunities?