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REPORT TO CAPITAL REGIONAL DISTRICT BOARD MEETING OF WEDNESDAY, MAY 13, 2020

SUBJECT Regional Parks – 2020 to 2021 Land Acquisition Strategy Criteria

ISSUE SUMMARY

Criteria to guide land acquisitions for regional parks and regional trails through the Land Acquisition Fund is required for the Regional Parks Land Acquisition Strategy 2020 to 2021.

BACKGROUND

Since 2000, the Capital Regional District (CRD) has acquired land through the Regional Parks Land Acquisition Fund (LAF). The acquisition of land has been guided by Board-approved land acquisition strategies in 2000, 2006, 2015 and 2018. The strategies defined the principles that guide land acquisition, and the criteria and process for acquisition of new lands. The strategy guides the acquisition of land so that available land acquisition funds are expended effectively and the most important parcels of land are acquired to achieve the proposed regional parks and trails system.

An updated land acquisition strategy is needed, as the 2018 to 2019 Land Acquisition Strategy (LAS) has expired. As the new Strategy will have updated information related to the status of specific properties, their availability for purchase, and valuations in consideration of available funds, this information will be presented at a closed meeting.

Land acquisition criteria is also an important component of the LAS and is intended to guide and assist staff in assessing the merit of acquisition of individual parcels. The 2018 to 2019 Regional Parks Land Acquisition Criteria (the Criteria) is attached as Appendix A. The Criteria is organized around three categories: environmental; outdoor experiences and activities; and management and planning. During property assessment, some of the key criteria used are:

- the naturalness of an area, including connecting to natural environments and protected areas
- the role of the property in addressing climate change mitigation and adaptation
- the significance of an area for outdoor activities and visitor experiences
- the contribution the area makes to the regional growth strategy
- rationalizing existing park boundaries

ALTERNATIVES

Alternative 1

That the 2018 to 2019 Regional Parks Land Acquisition Criteria be approved as the acquisition criteria for the Regional Parks Land Acquisition Strategy 2020 to 2021.

Alternative 2

That the Criteria be referred back to staff with direction.

IMPLICATIONS

Alignment with Existing Plans & Strategies

The Board-approved 2012-2021 Regional Parks Strategic Plan guides the future acquisition of land for regional parks and trails and describes the proposed system. Land acquisition strategies must align with the Regional Parks Strategic Plan. As the Regional Parks Strategic Plan is due for an update for 2022, and may include new direction for land acquisition, no additions or significant changes have been proposed to the 2020 to 2021 Land Acquisition Strategy (except where needed to provide updated information and maps). Updating the Regional Parks Strategic Plan would include a public consultation component.

Social Implications

In 2018, the CRD Board directed staff to undertake an online public opinion survey to obtain information on the public's views regarding whether to renew the LAF beyond 2019. A survey was made available to the public for 14 weeks in the summer/fall of 2018. A key highlight was that 89% of participants were in favour of extending the Regional Parks LAF for another 10 years. In 2019, the CRD Board renewed the fund for an additional 10-year period. In addition, the following three actions were ranked as priorities for regional parks and trails over the next 5 years: 1) acquire more land; 2) protect natural environments and species; and 3) restore and conserve natural environments and species.

Environmental and Climate Implications

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. 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.

CONCLUSION

Board-approved Land Acquisition Strategies define the principles and criteria that guide land acquisition through the LAF, the process for acquiring land, and set acquisition priorities. The 2018 to 2019 Land Acquisition Strategy has expired. No additions or significant changes are envisioned for the next strategy except where needed to provide updated information and maps. No changes have been proposed to the 2018 to 2019 Land Acquisition Criteria. Staff recommend that the criteria be incorporated as is into the 2020 to 2021 Land Acquisition Strategy.

RECOMMENDATION

That the 2018 to 2019 Regional Parks Land Acquisition Criteria be approved as the acquisition criteria for the Regional Parks Land Acquisition Strategy 2020 to 2021.

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

ATTACHMENT

Appendix A: 2018 to 2019 Regional Parks Land Acquisition Criteria