

**REPORT TO REGIONAL PARKS COMMITTEE  
MEETING OF WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 30, 2020**

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**SUBJECT**     **2019-2022 Parks & Natural Resource Management Service Planning**

**ISSUE SUMMARY**

To provide the Regional Parks Committee with an overview of relevant initiatives undertaken by the Regional Parks division to deliver on approved Board Priorities and the Corporate Plan and to consider an increase to the Land Acquisition Fund (LAF).

**BACKGROUND**

The CRD Board completed its strategic planning early in 2019 and approved the CRD Board Strategic Priorities 2019-2022.

The four priorities are:

1. Community Wellbeing – Transportation & Housing;
2. Climate Action & Environmental Stewardship;
3. First Nations Reconciliation; and
4. Advocacy, Governance & Accountability

The priorities were confirmed at the annual check-in on May 13, 2020.

The 2019-2022 CRD Corporate Plan is aligned to the Board direction. It highlights the initiatives the CRD needs to deliver over the Board's four-year term to address the region's most important needs. The Corporate Plan identified 10 initiatives under the Parks & Natural Resource Management, which fall under the Regional Parks Committee's mandate.

Appendix B *Parks & Natural Resource Management - Initiatives Progress Report* provides insights into what has been delivered through the 12 delivery initiatives approved last year, for delivery in 2020. Two initiatives related to environmental protection regarding invasive species and environmental stewardship, are also included.

The Service Planning process gathered information necessary to assemble a provisional budget for Committee and Board review. The purpose of this report is to explain how the Regional Parks divisional program of work connects to the Board Priorities, Corporate Plan and provisional budget.

In addition to the above, the following motion was carried at the CRD Board meeting Wednesday, April 8, 2020:

*That staff report back on options to improve the capacity of the CRD Parks Acquisition Fund, for example, starting in 2021 by \$2.00 per year to reach \$40.00 from its current \$20.00.*

## **ALTERNATIVES**

### *Alternative 1*

The Regional Parks Committee recommends to the Capital Regional District Board:

1. That Appendix A Community Need Summary - Parks & Natural Resource Management be approved as presented and advanced to the October 28, 2020 provisional budget review process.
2. That the Land Acquisition Fund be maintained at the current rate of \$20 per average residential household assessment.

### *Alternative 2*

That Appendix A Community Need Summary - Parks & Natural Resource Management be referred back to staff for additional information.

## **IMPLICATIONS**

### *Financial Implications*

Initiatives identified in the Corporate Plan (including Board Priorities) cannot be undertaken without resourcing. The Board determines resourcing through its annual review and approval of financial plans. To support the Board's decision-making, staff, through the service planning process, provide recommendations on funding, timing and service levels.

Staff will explore a number of strategies to ensure sufficient funding is in place in future years to sustain the Regional Parks service. A revenue strategy is being prepared for fall 2020 that will identify opportunities to fund new assets. Future additional requisition increases may be also be required to fund significant new infrastructure or to address unforeseen failures of existing priority assets.

During this year's service planning process, staff have been mindful of the fiscal challenges facing the region in the months ahead. To that end, any budget increase or other impacts have been mitigated as much as possible.

Staff have not identified any new service delivery initiatives for 2021 that require additional funding. Priority initiatives from 2020, such as hiring a Recreation Specialist and a Cultural Interpreter, have been completed by repurposing existing vacancies. The Regional Parks Strategy update is also a priority and an options analysis is currently being done in-house and a staff report will be presented at a fall 2020 Regional Parks Committee meeting.

Since 2000, Regional Parks has acquired almost 4,800 hectares through the LAF. The fund was established in 2000 for a 10-year period (2000-2009) at a rate of \$10 per average residential household assessment. In 2010, the fund was extended for 10 years (2010-2019), starting at a rate of \$12 per average residential household assessment and increasing by \$2 per year to a maximum of \$20 in 2014, through to 2019. In 2019, the CRD Board renewed the LAF for another 10-year period (2020-2029) at the rate of \$20 per average residential household assessment.

For 2020, the LAF generated approximately \$3.9 million. The LAF increased from 3.75M in 2019 to \$3.86M in 2020, as a result of the addition of new households (property assessment folios) and will continue to grow with the creation of new households in the region.

If the LAF were increased in a similar phased implementation, each \$2 per average household increment would add approximately \$400,000 of available funds annually for land acquisition. A \$2 per average household increase represents a 2.5% increase to the total Regional Parks budget, and less than 0.15% increase to the CRD operating budget. By 2030, the LAF could generate in excess of \$8 million per year, resulting in a net 25% increase compared to the current Regional Parks budget or a 1.5% increase compared to the current CRD operating budget.

### *Service Delivery Implications*

The Community Need Summary provides an overview of all work that needs to be undertaken in order to meet regulatory requirements, satisfy Board direction and meet the needs of the communities we serve.

To date, increased attention has been placed on educating the public on social distancing, staff and public safety and additional signage to increase awareness of prevention activities. This, in some cases, has required limited access or alternative approaches to public access, customer service, public engagement and meetings. It is anticipated that further COVID-19 impacts to service delivery will be realized throughout 2021.

The acquisition of new land often requires additional funds for management, development and operations. These costs are not included in the estimated costs to acquire land identified in the Land Acquisition Strategy. The management and development cost for each acquisition are identified in a report to the Board when it considers acquisition of a specific parcel.

On average, the cost to manage one hectare of CRD regional parkland is \$957/year. Sustainable service delivery needs to consider and plan for the growth of the CRD regional parks system over time. For example, maximizing optimization strategies and revenue generation options would be the priority for long-term system sustainability, as opposed to additional LAF funding.

### *Social Implications*

Regional park visitation statistics indicate an upward growth trend in annual use. Higher visitor use puts utilization pressure on existing infrastructure, creating an increased need for ongoing maintenance or earlier replacement of assets.

Sustainable service delivery needs to consider and plan for the environmental and social carrying capacity of the parks and trails.

Regional parks and trails contribute significantly to the environmental, economic and social sustainability of the region and are a defining ingredient of the region's livability. However, given the social and economic uncertainty associated with the COVID-19 worldwide pandemic and other cost pressures emerging on requisitions across the Capital Regional District service areas at present, it is prudent to maintain the current LAF levy at the current level.

## **CONCLUSION**

Staff have been progressing initiatives and actions identified in the Corporate Plan, including Board Priorities. The Board determines resourcing through its annual review and approval of financial plans. As per previous years, to support the Board's decision-making, staff are providing recommendations on funding, timing and service levels through the service and financial planning processes.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

The Regional Parks Committee recommends to the Capital Regional District Board:

1. That Appendix A, Community Need Summary - Parks & Natural Resource Management be approved as presented and advanced to the October 28, 2020 provisional budget review process.
2. That the Land Acquisition Fund be maintained at the current rate of \$20 per average residential household assessment.

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

## **ATTACHMENTS**

Appendix A: Community Need Summary - Parks & Natural Resource Management  
Appendix B: Parks & Natural Resource Management – Initiatives Progress Report