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## REPORT TO REGIONAL PARKS COMMITTEE MEETING OF WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 28, 2020

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**SUBJECT**     **Response to Notice of Motion: Galloping Goose Regional Trail Dog Management – Kilometre 49-Kilometre 55**

### **ISSUE SUMMARY**

A Notice of Motion was approved at the February 26, 2020 Regional Parks Committee (RPC) meeting requesting that staff report back on providing a seasonal '*dog-under-command*' option for the Galloping Goose Trail from KM 49 to the CRD watershed [KM 55], including data on enforcement and options for streamlined engagement.

### **BACKGROUND**

The RPC, at its February 26, 2020 meeting, passed the following motion:

*to request staff to report back on providing a 'dog-under-command' option for the Galloping Goose Trail from KM 49 to the CRD watershed [KM 55], except between June 1 and Sept 15 between 9 am and 9 pm, including data on tickets issued in 2018 and 2019 and also including options for streamlined engagement including cyclists, Sooke residents and other trail users.*

The Regional Trails Management Plan, approved by the Capital Regional District (CRD) Board in 2016, directs that pets must be on-leash at all times on all regional trails, including the entire 55 km Galloping Goose Regional Trail. This direction was developed through a three-year public process, which included a public survey (2013) and a management planning process (2014-2016). The planning process considered input received from First Nations, municipalities/electoral areas and the public.

Issues raised through public engagement regarding dogs on regional trails included: the danger of dogs moving across the path of oncoming cycling traffic (safety for cyclists and dogs); environmental concerns; off-leash dogs running up to other users; off-leash dogs knocking over children and adults; and people being afraid of dogs. There were also comments supporting dogs and having dogs off-leash on the regional trails.

In developing the Regional Trails Management Plan (2016), the multi-disciplinary planning team considered all comments received, as well as the conservation, visitor safety and experience, cultural heritage, operations, enforcement, and planning implications of dog management alternatives. In rural multiple-use portions of the Galloping Goose Regional Trail, including km 49-55 (see Appendix A for location map), additional considerations if dogs were allowed off leash included: risk of large carnivore interactions; conflicts with equestrian trail users; impacts to sensitive flora/fauna (e.g., ground nesting birds, small mammals or a significant plant that dogs off leash/off trail might impact); and impacts to agriculture.

A Regional Trails Management Plan (RTMP) policy is to have regionally consistent practices where possible. The RTMP has a consistent dog management policy for all portions, classifications, and jurisdictions of the three current regional trails (the Galloping Goose,

Lochside, and the E&N Rail Trail-Humpback Connector). The consistency in policy is a response to system-wide dog management concerns, as well as the additional concerns for rural multiple-use trails, and provides clarity in public awareness and enforcement efforts.

The RTMP dog management policy states:

*For the safety of trail users, their pets, and wildlife, all pets must be on-leash at all times while on regional trails....Pet owners or guardians should ensure that their pets remain both on the trail and on the proper side of the trails.*

Based on this Board-approved policy, the CRD Parks Regulation Bylaw No. 4225, which regulates the use of regional parks and trails, was updated in 2018 to require dogs on leash on the three regional trails.

Similarly, the Board-approved 2019 Dog Management Policy Framework assigns the baseline dog management category of “dogs on-leash” to all regional trails, with “dogs on-leash optional under control” noted as not an appropriate category.

The RPC also requested enforcement ticketing data. Enforcement of the dogs on-leash policy is primarily “education with voluntary compliance” conversations; written warnings and tickets are issued when voluntary compliance is not achieved. Data specific to km 49-55 of the Galloping Goose Regional Trail is not available. Combined data of 2018 and 2019 dog on-leash enforcement at Sooke Potholes Regional Park and the Galloping Goose Regional Trail (primarily between Marwood Avenue [km 19] and Kapoor Regional Park [km 55]) shows approximately 422 “education with voluntary compliance” conversations, 14 written warnings, and one ticket. See Appendix C for more detailed data.

## **ALTERNATIVES**

### *Alternative 1*

The Regional Parks Committee recommends to the CRD Board:  
That the direction for dog management included in the 2016 Regional Trails Management Plan remain in place for the Galloping Goose Regional Trail between kilometres 49 and 55.

### *Alternative 2*

The Regional Parks Committee recommends to the CRD Board:  
That the Board direct staff to initiate a Regional Trails Management Plan amendment process and undertake streamlined First Nations, municipal/electoral, and public engagement regarding a possible amendment to the dog management policy on the Galloping Goose Regional Trail between kilometres 49 and 55, and report back to the Committee.

### *Alternative 3*

The Regional Parks Committee recommends to the Capital Regional District Board:  
That this report be referred back to staff for additional information.

## **IMPLICATIONS**

### *Environmental and Climate Implications*

There are no new environmental implications with Alternative 1.

If Alternative 2 is chosen, and an amendment allowing a measure of seasonal “dogs-leash optional under control” is approved, there is potential for increased risk of conflicts between dogs and large carnivores, as km 49 to 55 of the Galloping Goose is wilderness area with active habitat for bears, wolves, and cougars. Carnivores may also be more present during the spring and fall seasons due to decreased human use, as well as seasonal food opportunities, such as the salmon runs in the adjacent Sooke River. There is also potential of increased risk to sensitive flora/fauna during critical life stages. Dogs are required to be on leash year round in the adjacent regional parks (Sea to Sea, Sooke Potholes, and Kapoor) for these reasons.

### *Social Implications*

With Alternative 1, some members of the public will be disappointed that the existing on-leash requirement for regional trails is not changed, while others who sought on-leash dog management practices through the Regional Trails Management Plan process are likely to be satisfied that the existing policy remains in place.

With Alternative 2, First Nations, municipalities/electoral areas, and the public would need to be engaged in a streamlined engagement process of 7+ months. See Appendix B for a summary of a potential streamlined Regional Trails Management Plan amendment process.

If Alternative 2 is chosen and an amendment allowing a measure of “leash optional under control” is approved, there is potential for increased safety and visitor experience conflicts between dogs and other trail users, particularly equestrians and cyclists. Once the Todd Creek Trestle reopens, an increase in usage is expected. Of note: while there are no trail counters to provide user data on this portion of the trail, this area is sparsely populated with likely lower trail use in the fall-spring seasons in comparison to commuter serving portions of the trail.

### *Service Delivery Implications*

Alternative 2 requires undertaking a public amendment process for the Regional Trails Management Plan. Working on amendments will possibly require CRD staff to delay completing other park management planning priorities (i.e., Mount Work, East Sooke, and Roche Cove-Matheson Lake regional parks management planning processes).

If the current policy is amended as suggested by the RPC motion (creating an area of exception to the regional trail policy), signage and mapping would need to be updated, and a public awareness campaign undertaken to clarify where and when dogs could be “leash optional under control.”

### *Financial Implications*

No financial implications exist with Alternative 1.

If Alternative 2 is chosen, there will be financial implications of conducting First Nations, municipal/electoral, and public engagement for a Regional Trails Management Plan amendment process (e.g., advertising, venue rental). This is likely in the order of \$5,000.

There may be additional financial implications to move forward on an amendment without delaying existing planning processes by utilizing contracting opportunities.

#### *Intergovernmental Implications*

If Alternative 1 is chosen, the CRD website could be updated to identify where in the regional parks system “leash optional under control” areas exist. The CRD could provide this link to all municipalities to share for information and public awareness. Additionally, the CRD could promote that the municipalities and electoral areas consider providing additional dog off-leash or leash-optional opportunities in appropriate local parks and trails.

If Alternative 2 is chosen, at a minimum, all municipalities the Galloping Goose runs through should be offered the opportunity to comment on the proposed amendment, as those municipalities may want to consider the implications of a similar amendment within their jurisdictions.

#### *Alignment with Existing Plans & Strategies*

Alternative 1 maintains consistency with the Board-approved Regional Trails Management Plan and the Board-approved Dog Management Policy Framework.

Alternative 2 initiates a process to consider an amendment to the Regional Trails Management Plan. If policy changes are approved, there would be an inconsistency with the 2019 Dog Management Policy Framework.

#### *Alignment with Board & Corporate Priorities*

The 2019-2022 CRD Corporate Plan identifies dog management as a Board priority and directs Regional Parks to develop a Dog Management Policy Framework. A Dog Management Policy Framework was developed and approved by the CRD Board at its December 11, 2019 meeting. The policy framework provides a consistent, systematic way to determine how dogs will be managed within the regional park system.

### **CONCLUSION**

This report outlines the potential implications of providing a seasonal ‘dog-under-command’ option for the Galloping Goose Regional Trail from KM 49 to the CRD watershed [KM 55], provides information on dog-related enforcement and tickets issued, and includes a potential streamlined Regional Trails Management Plan amendment engagement process should the Committee choose that approach. Due to the risk of increased user conflicts, large carnivore conflicts, environmental impacts, service delivery implications and complications for policy communication, staff recommend that the dog management policy remain in place.

**RECOMMENDATION**

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

That the direction for dog management included in the 2016 Regional Trails Management Plan remain in place for the Galloping Goose Regional Trail between kilometres 49 and 55.

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: Location Map

Appendix B: Regional Trails Management Plan Process

Appendix C: Enforcement of Dogs on Leash 2018-2019