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REPORT TO REGIONAL PARKS COMMITTEE MEETING OF WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 26, 2022

SUBJECT Regional Parks – Strategic Plan Update

ISSUE SUMMARY

To seek input and accept the proposed direction of the new Capital Regional District (CRD) Regional Parks Strategic Plan prior to seeking input from stakeholders, First Nations and the public.

BACKGROUND

The CRD Board initiated an update of the Regional Parks Strategic Plan at its meeting on December 8, 2021 and passed the following motion:

1. *That the Board extend the 2012-2021 Regional Parks Strategic Plan's term for eight months and that staff bring back an updated Strategic Plan for Board approval in July 2022.*
2. *And that a workshop of the Regional Parks Committee members be convened in January 2022 to provide input on the plan.*
3. *That staff report back at the January workshop with a list of proposed stakeholders for direct engagement.*
4. *That the committee request that staff, including the First Nations Relations division, engage all First Nations in the region in an early, meaningful and ongoing manner in the development of the plan.*

The development of the Regional Parks Strategic Plan 2012-2021 (Strategic Plan) was initiated in 2009 to replace the CRD Parks Master Plan that had been in effect since 2000. The development of the Strategic Plan was staff supported but primarily led by a volunteer Citizens Advisory Panel and included extensive engagement with stakeholders, the public, government, First Nations and other park agencies. The current Strategic Plan has been extended until July 2022 when an updated document will be brought forward.

The Strategic Plan continues to provide ongoing direction and remains useful as a “roadmap” for the Regional Parks Division, as many of the trends, challenges and priorities are still relevant today. A status review of strategic actions from the Strategic Plan is included as Appendix A. This review provides a benchmark from which to consider the direction of an updated Strategic Plan. There are 13 actions that have not started or are still being initiated and 13 actions that are developed.

The current planning context in the region has evolved since 2012 with the adoption of other CRD strategies and Board initiatives. Updating the Strategic Plan to reflect how these strategies relate to Regional Parks, as well as modernizing the format of the document, will improve its application to service delivery. This exercise will draw from corporate knowledge, First Nations and public engagement outcomes, and recent Board direction.

Components of the Strategic Plan update that would benefit from Committee and Board input are: the proposed vision, value and mission statements, key priorities, and potential targets. Staff have prepared a presentation outlining the Strategic Plan update context and framework (Appendix B).

Proposed key priority statements are included in more detail for the Board's consideration (Appendix C).

Engagement with First Nations, key stakeholders and the public will seek feedback on the proposed materials to be included in the Strategic Plan update. As requested, staff have prepared a list of stakeholder groups to be invited to participate in a series of focus groups (Appendix D).

ALTERNATIVES

Alternative 1

The Regional Parks Committee recommends to the Capital Regional District Board:
That the proposed vision, value and mission statements and proposed priorities be accepted for stakeholder, First Nations and public input.

Alternative 2

The Regional Parks Committee recommends to the Capital Regional District Board:
That the proposed vision, value and mission statements and proposed priorities, as amended, be accepted for stakeholder, First Nations and public input.

IMPLICATIONS

Alignment with Board & Corporate Priorities

Board priorities, approved plans, corporate priorities and established service mandates drive our work. Initiative 6a-1 in the 2019-2022 Corporate Plan directs staff to "Ensure appropriate funding for parks & trails infrastructure, improvements & maintenance by updating the Regional Parks Strategy with consideration to ecological, recreation & reconciliation principles, land acquisition capacity, & expanded partnerships with First Nations & parks user groups."

Alignment with Existing Plans & Strategies

An updated Strategic Plan will reflect outcomes that haven't already been considered in current CRD plans, reports and strategies, such as the Regional Growth Strategy, Climate Action Strategy, the Regional Transportation Plan, and the First Nations Task Force Report. These strategies have undergone extensive public engagement and have been endorsed by the CRD Board since the adoption of the 2012-21 Regional Parks Strategic Plan.

Intergovernmental Implications

The CRD's path toward reconciliation with Indigenous peoples commits to supporting First Nations' self-determination, shared prosperity and working together to take care of the land and water. First Nations in the region are invited to engage in the Regional Parks Strategic Plan update in an early, meaningful and ongoing manner to determine the key priorities and initiatives to work on together over the next five to ten years. Staff from CRD Regional Parks and First Nations Relations, with the support of a consultant, have sent letters to the Nations outlining the purpose of the Strategic Plan update and inviting participation to better understand the reconciliation objectives related to the Strategic Plan update and the priority initiatives of focus going forward. The updated Strategic Plan will support the CRD's commitment to reconciliation as a key priority and highlight opportunities for ongoing and meaningful engagement with First Nations on initiatives such as park management, ecosystem restoration, and shared prosperity.

Social Implications

Proposed values and key priorities to be included in the Strategic Plan include accessibility, equity and outdoor recreation opportunities that improve our health and well-being.

Stakeholder engagement will invite feedback on the Board’s input for the vision, values, mission, issues and key priorities to be included in the Strategic Plan. A stakeholder engagement plan has been developed that establishes key interest groups and level of engagement. Staff have developed objective criteria for selecting key stakeholder groups to participate and provide feedback. Information sessions and an online survey will also be available for public input. Engagement is anticipated to occur between February and April 2022.

Environmental & Climate Implications

Resiliency and conservation are proposed as key priorities to be included in the Strategic Plan. Regional parks and trails are vital in helping to achieve the region’s climate action, natural resource protection and active transportation goals.

Service Delivery Implications

Staff time has been allocated to update the Strategic Plan and conduct engagement. In this way, the Strategic Plan can be updated at minimal cost and with the least amount of delay between expiration of the existing plan and adoption of an updated plan.

Financial Implications

Costs associated with this Strategic Plan update will be covered by the Regional Parks 2022 core budget.

CONCLUSION

The 2012-2021 Regional Parks Strategic Plan expires in July 2022. The workshop of the Regional Parks Committee will provide input on the vision, values, mission, issues and priorities to be incorporated in the new Strategic Plan. Following the Board’s approval, staff will seek stakeholder feedback and provide public engagement opportunities. First Nations in the region are invited to ongoing and meaningful engagement in the Strategic Plan. An updated plan will be presented to the CRD Board for consideration in July 2022.

RECOMMENDATION

The Regional Parks Committee recommends to the Capital Regional District Board:
That the proposed vision, value and mission statements and proposed priorities be accepted for stakeholder, First Nations and public input.

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: Status Review

Appendix B: Presentation

Appendix C: Key Priority Statements

Appendix D: Stakeholder Engagement