

# Regional Parks and Trails Strategic Plan 2022-2032

## Territorial Acknowledgement

The CRD conducts its business within the traditional territories of many First Nations, including but not limited to BOKEĆEN (Pauquachin), MÁLEXEŁ (Malahat), Pacheedaht, Pune'laxutth' (Penelakut), Sc'ianew (Beecher Bay), Songhees, STÁUTW (Tsawout), T'Sou-ke, WJOŁEŁP (Tsartlip), WSIKEM (Tseycum), and x<sup>w</sup>sepsəm (Esquimalt), all of whom have a long standing relationship with the land and waters from time immemorial that continues to this day.

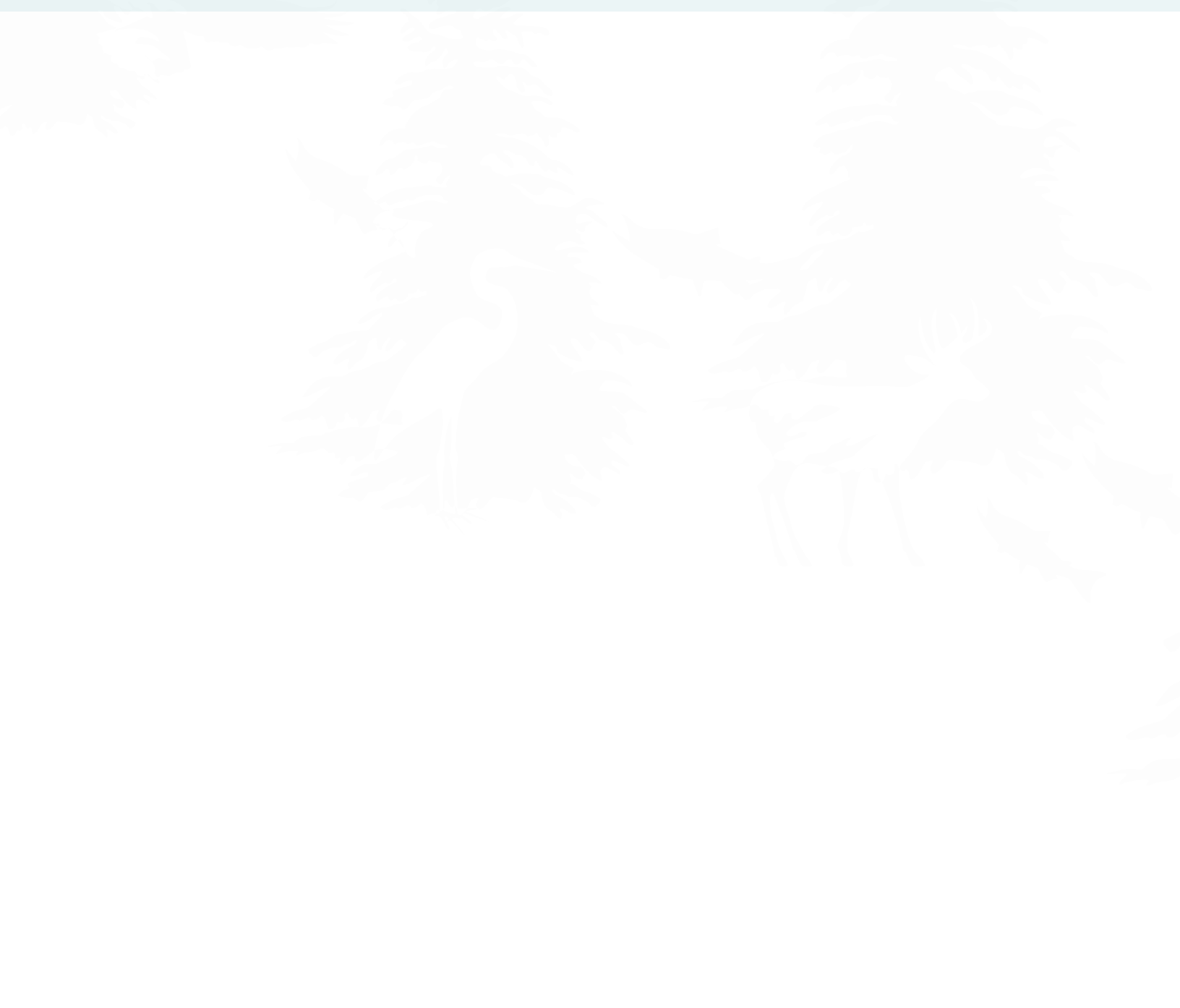


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# Organizational Overview

The Capital Regional District (CRD) delivers regional, sub-regional and local services to 13 municipalities and three electoral areas on southern Vancouver Island and the Gulf Islands. Governed by a 24-member Board of Directors, the CRD works collaboratively with First Nations and all levels of government to enable sustainable growth, foster community well-being, and develop cost-effective infrastructure, while continuing to provide core services to residents throughout the region.





## Executive Summary

The Regional Parks and Trails Strategic Plan (Strategic Plan) is an overarching document that provides a long-term vision for regional parks and trails from 2022 to 2032. This updated 10-year Strategic Plan builds on the success of the Regional Parks Strategic Plan 2012-2021. It is founded on the belief that regional parks and trails provide immense benefits to the region and that it is necessary to plan today to protect those natural areas that are vital to the long-term health of the region's natural environment, cultural heritage and the health of people and of our communities.

The Capital Regional District (CRD) Board initiated an update to the Strategic Plan in December 2021 and set the initial direction for a renewed vision, mission, values and priorities for engagement. This Strategic Plan has been developed with input from First Nations, stakeholder groups and the public, and draws on corporate knowledge and linkages with other CRD strategies.

The highlights of the Strategic Plan are: a commitment to build strong relationships with First Nations in the region and support Indigenous rights; increased efforts to conserve natural areas and cultural heritage; improvements to the visitor experience; preparations for and action on climate change; improved resiliency across the service; and enhanced access to and equity in regional parks and trails.

As the Strategic Plan is implemented over the next decade, monitoring and reporting will be conducted so that the status of actions can be tracked and progress towards achieving the goals can be realized. Minor or major amendments to the Strategic Plan may be considered by the CRD Board over time, in response to shifting priorities.

# 1. Introduction

In 2019, the Capital Regional District (CRD) Board made it a priority to update the Regional Parks Strategic Plan 2012-2021. The CRD developed this Regional Parks and Trails Strategic Plan 2022-2032 (the Plan) between December 2021 and June 2022. The Plan updates the former strategy to reflect current challenges and opportunities affecting the region, as well as to incorporate recent CRD initiatives and priorities. The success of this Plan relies on a commitment to superior service delivery, cooperation with partners, and relationships with First Nations.

The Plan is structured as follows: the introduction sets out a renewed vision, values and principles, and mission statements and outlines the engagement process for the Plan update. Section 2 includes a review of the state of regional parks and regional trails in 2022. Section 3 establishes a classification system for regional parks and regional trails. Key priorities and initiatives for regional parks and regional trails are organized in five themes in Section 4. Section 5 outlines the monitoring and reporting structure for the Plan. A glossary of key terms is provided in Appendix A and supporting information is included in Appendices B-E.



Sea to Sea Regional Park



## 1.1 Vision

The vision identifies the desired future state of regional parks and regional trails in 2032:

We have an expanded and connected system of regional parks and regional trails that are rich in biodiversity, respect Indigenous cultural heritage and use, inspire stewardship, are resilient to change, and provide enjoyable outdoor recreation experiences.

The initial direction for the vision statement was set by the CRD Board at the outset of the Strategic Plan update process and input was received from First Nations, stakeholder organizations and the public throughout the engagement process.

This vision recognizes that the CRD must play a prominent role as a leader in expanding the system of regional parks and trails, in collaboratively and respectfully stewarding natural areas, respecting cultural use, and in facilitating health and wellbeing in the face of a changing climate and a rapidly growing region. This Plan sets the course for the CRD to learn from and work with First Nations communities, as long-term stewards of these lands, achieve a rich and resilient network of parks and trails and to encourage a new generation of stewards.

Reaching the desired vision will be successful if the CRD works closely with First Nations communities, other levels of government, organizations, institutions and residents in the region. A focus on equity and accessibility in the Plan is aimed at encouraging broader participation in regional parks and trails.



## 1.2 Mission

The mission defines the fundamental purpose of the regional parks and regional trails system, describing why it exists, what it does, and the level of performance to be met or surpassed. The mission for regional parks and regional trails is to:

- Operate and manage a connected system of regional parks for public enjoyment.
- Foster stewardship by learning from and working with long-term land stewards and by connecting people to nature.
- Operate and manage a regional trail network for active transportation and recreation.
- Be fiscally responsible and accountable in decision-making.



Sea to Sea Regional Park



## 1.3 Values

The following values and guiding principles were identified during the development of this Plan. Values and principles define what is important to the CRD and will be applied to guide the implementation of this Plan:

**Access:** Regional parks and regional trails can be accessed by transit, micromobility, cycling and walking.

**Accountability:** Decision-making processes and financial management are transparent and based on the best available information.

**Connectivity:** Biodiversity depends on connected natural area corridors and complete communities depend on connected trail corridors and active transportation networks.

**Conservation:** Regional parks protect, restore and enhance the region's cultural heritage, biodiversity, and rare and unique ecosystems.

**Education:** Promoting literacy of the region's natural and cultural heritage increases awareness of the interconnectedness between humans and the nature and impacts of climate change.

**Equity:** Regional parks and regional trails are inclusive, culturally safe, and accessible to visitors of all ages, abilities and income levels.

**Outdoor Recreation:** Outdoor recreation benefits our health and wellbeing, connects us to each other and immerses us in nature.

**Partnership:** A commitment to developing meaningful partnerships with First Nations that respects Indigenous knowledge, First Nations governance and cultural use, as well as to developing partnerships with other levels of government and organizations in the region.

**Reconciliation:** A commitment to take action towards Indigenous reconciliation by respecting Indigenous laws and strengthening relationships with First Nations communities.

**Resiliency:** Regional parks and regional trails adapt to change by incorporating solutions that take action on climate change, recognize the value of Indigenous cultural knowledge, ensure sustainable service delivery and aim to benefit future generations.

**Stewardship:** A commitment to learning from and implementing approaches from First Nations, who are the long term land stewards, and inspiring residents and visitors to be stewards of the region's natural and cultural heritage by leading by example and showcasing best practices.



## 1.4 Engagement Process

In December 2021, the CRD Board initiated an update to the Regional Parks Strategic Plan 2012-2021. After initial input was received from the Regional Parks Committee and CRD Board to set the strategic direction of the Plan update, an engagement process was implemented between February and April to seek input on the Plan update from stakeholder organizations representing regional conservation, outdoor recreation and community interests, staff from other park agencies, and from the public (Figures 1 and 2). Collectively, the input received through this engagement process has contributed to the development of the vision, mission, values and principles, key priorities, initiatives and targets identified in this Plan. A complete engagement report accompanies this Plan.

The CRD's boundaries span the traditional territories of many First Nations, who have been taking care of the land since time immemorial. The CRD believes that a positive working relationship with First Nations is good for the whole region. Engagement with First Nations on the Regional Parks and Trails Strategic Plan 2022-2032 is ongoing throughout the development and implementation of this Plan. An engagement report outlining First Nations input to date accompanies this Plan.

FIGURE 1. ENGAGEMENT PROCESS TIMELINE

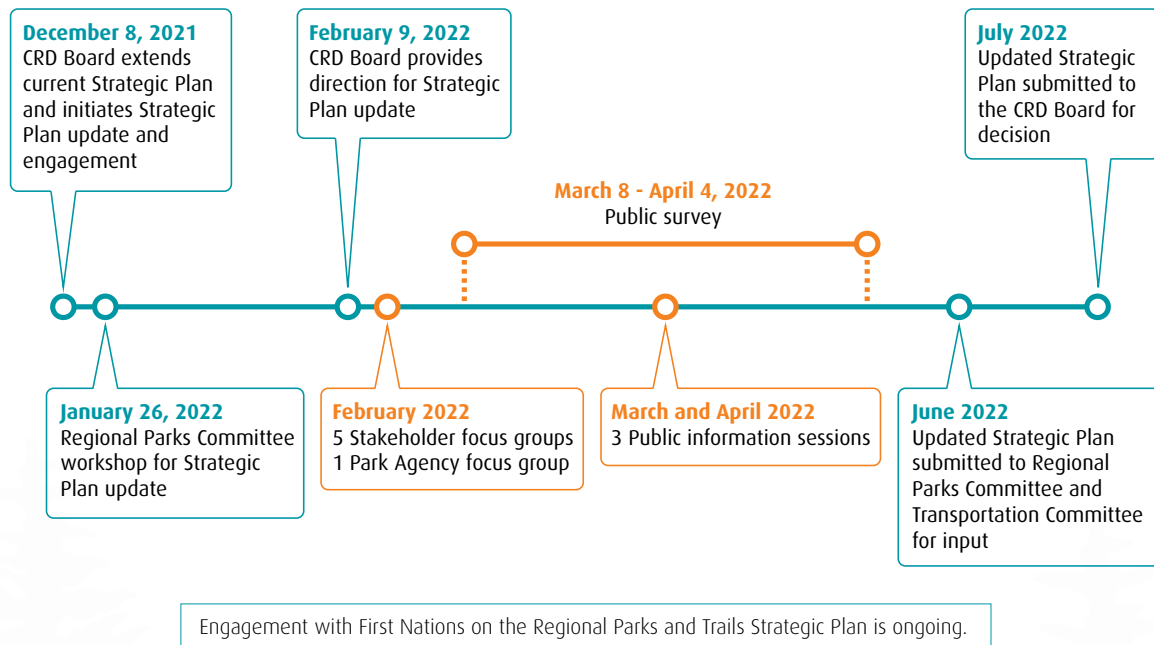


FIGURE 2. ENGAGEMENT OVERVIEW







## 2. Regional Parks and Trails in 2022

### 2.1 Regional Parks Service

The CRD is the regional government for the 13 municipalities and three electoral areas that are located on the southern tip of Vancouver Island (Map 1). The CRD covers an area of approximately 238,000 hectares (ha) and extends from Port Renfrew in the west, to the Malahat and Saanich Inlet, to Victoria and the Saanich Peninsula, and Salt Spring Island and the Southern Gulf Islands in the east.

The CRD provides over 200 services in the following categories:

- Regional, where all municipalities and electoral areas are served
- Sub-regional, where two or more jurisdictions are served
- Local, in the electoral areas where the CRD is the local government

The authority to provide a regional parks and regional trails service is granted by the Province of British Columbia (BC) to the regional district primarily through provisions outlined in the *Local Government Act*.

The CRD has provided a service for the provision and maintenance of regional parks and regional trails since incorporation in 1966. The service is a regional service provided to all municipalities and electoral areas in the CRD, as per the “Regional Parks Extended Service Establishment Bylaw No. 1, 1989”, CRD Bylaw No. 1749. The CRD Board is the decision-making authority for the service. The CRD Regional Parks Committee provides input to the Board on matters pertaining to regional parks and regional trails. As of 2022, the CRD Transportation Committee also provides input to the Board on regional trail matters (mobility and recreation, including land acquisition, management, operations and programs for the Galloping Goose, Lochside and E&N regional trails). Funding for the service is primarily through property tax requisition, with additional funding received from non-tax revenue sources, borrowing and grant funding.



In 2022, there are 32 regional parks and four regional trails in the system, comprising over 13,200 hectares (ha) of land (Map 2). Regional parks contribute approximately 27% to the region's network of protected natural areas (Appendix B). Map 2 shows the current extent of parks and protected areas, including federal, provincial, regional and municipal. The CRD's protected watershed lands are also included, as they comprise a significant area dedicated to protection of the region's drinking water supply.

In contrast to most municipal or community park services, regional parks in BC tend to be larger parcels of land located outside of the central urban core and having more limited recreation facilities. Regional parks generally contrast the scale of the vast provincial and federal park systems, and differ from the conservation mandate of conservancies and trust funds. In the CRD, regional parks receive high levels of visitation, offer high-quality facilities, and make up the largest type of park, covering 5.5% of the region's land base (Appendix B). Regional parks are provided for public enjoyment and are compatible with the objectives of protecting biodiversity and cultural heritage. The dynamic of establishing regional parks for the purpose of public use and enjoyment, and for conservation, will become increasingly challenging with continued population growth and development pressure in the region.

Regional trails differ from neighbourhood-scale walking and cycling infrastructure, as they span municipal boundaries and serve as off-street greenway corridors for both active transportation and recreation. Regional trails also differ from provincially-designated Recreation Trails, such as the Kludahk Trail, and iconic hiking trail experiences, such as the Provincial Juan de Fuca Marine Trail and federal West Coast Trail. Regional trails will become increasingly important in supporting the regional transportation mode-shift towards active transportation and micromobility choices, and for improving health and wellness in the region's population.

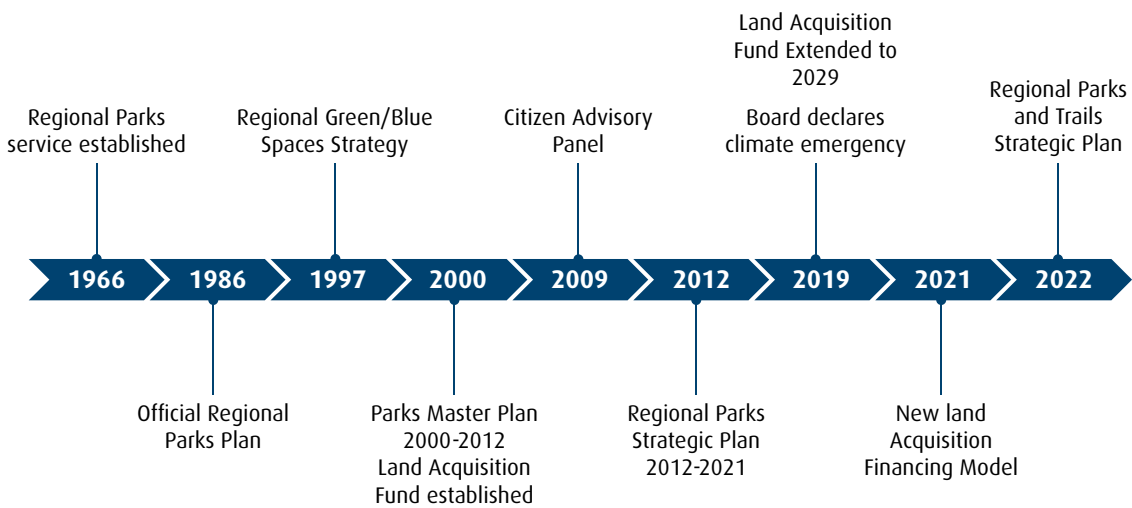




Elk/Beaver Lake Regional Park

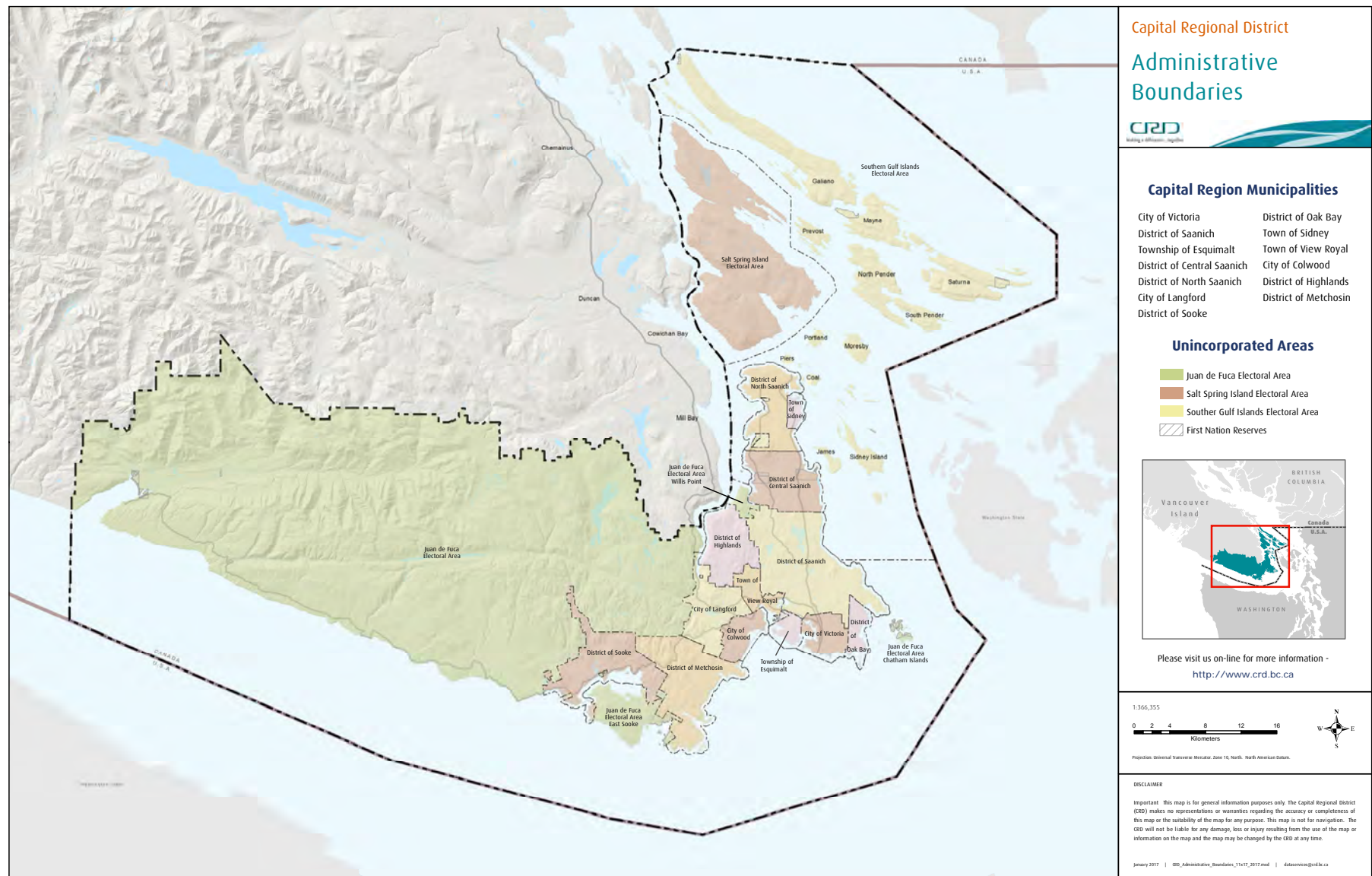
The management of regional parks and regional trails has been guided by various plans and strategies over the years. The former Regional Parks Strategic Plan 2012-2021, developed with extensive involvement by a Citizens Advisory Panel, has provided guidance to service delivery over the past ten years. Many of the foundational principles in the former Strategic Plan are incorporated into this updated Plan, and emerging priorities over the past decade have been considered for inclusion in this updated Plan. Notable milestones impacting regional parks and regional trails are highlighted in Figure 3.

FIGURE 3. ACTION THROUGH THE YEARS

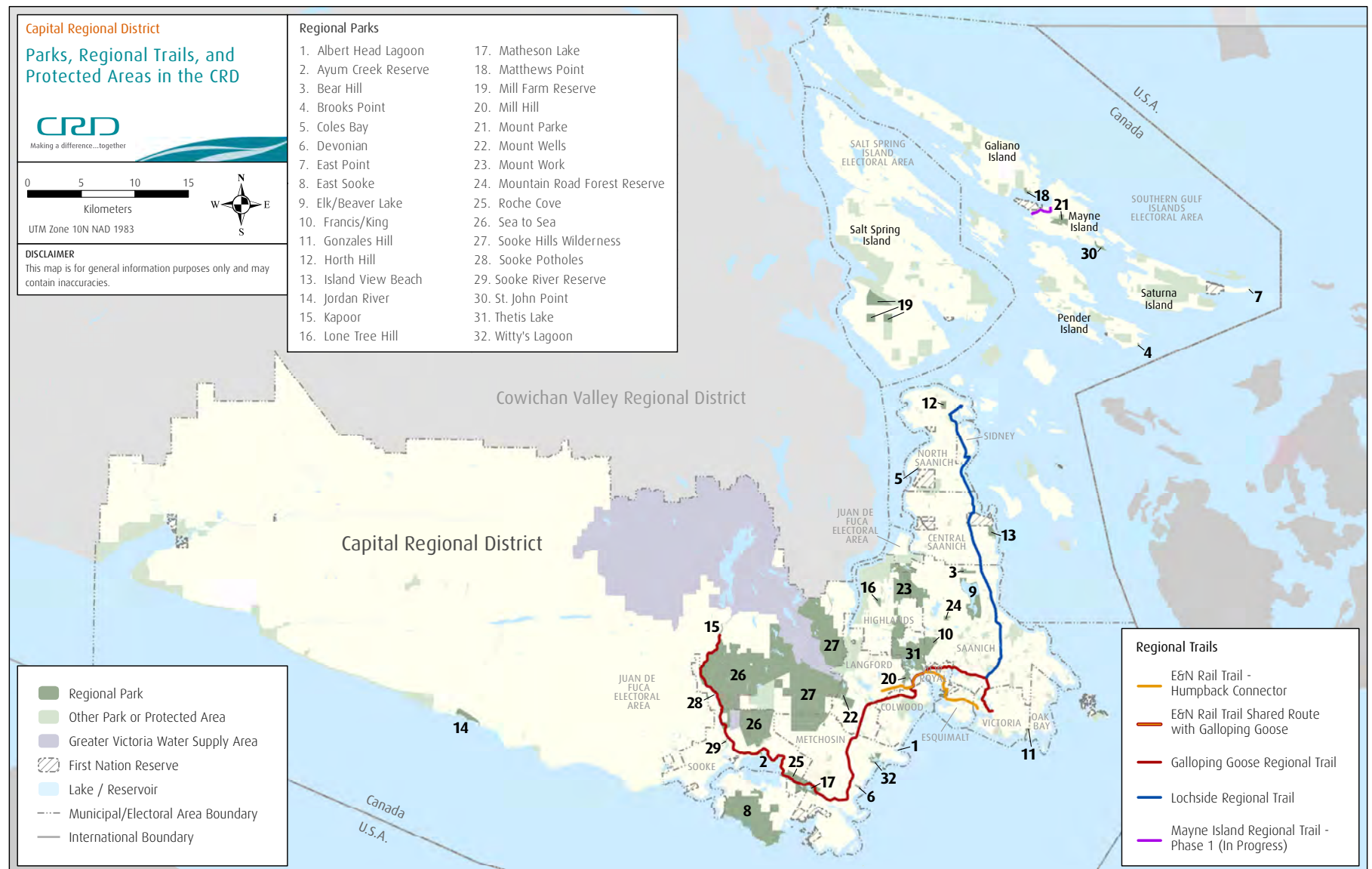




MAP 1. ADMINISTRATIVE BOUNDARIES



MAP 2. PARKS AND PROTECTED AREAS IN THE CRD







## 2.2 Cultural Setting

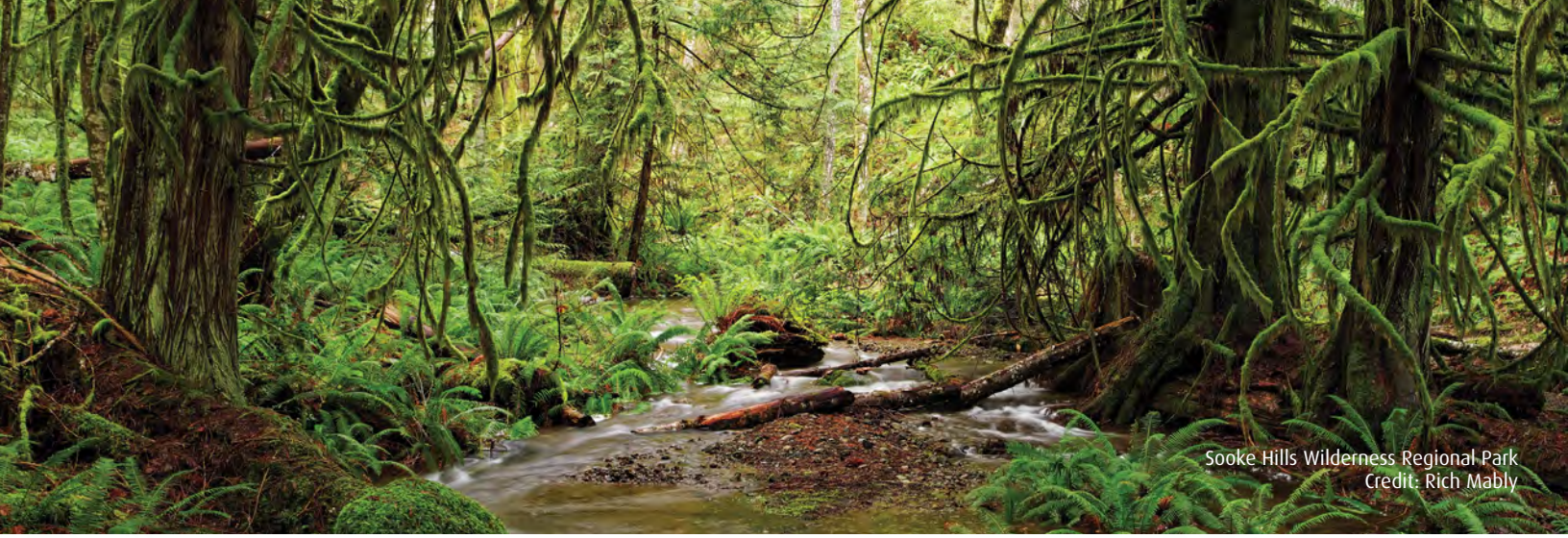
First Nations with traditional territory in the region follow Indigenous laws, assert Aboriginal Rights protected by section 35 of the *Constitution Act*, and many First Nations are also signatories of the Douglas Treaties.

The CRD's 2018 First Nations Task Force Final Report (Final Report) recommends actions and next steps for the CRD's path towards more inclusive models of governance and decision making between the CRD and First Nations governments. The CRD's Statement of Reconciliation underpins this Final Report and guides the organization's initiatives at the Board, leadership and staff level. The CRD can support reconciliation in many ways. Such opportunities are identified in the Final Report including, but not limited to, incorporating traditional knowledge in park management decisions, offering cultural acumen staff training, and involving First Nations in restoration projects. The CRD Corporate Plan 2019-2022 further identifies the need for the CRD to undertake engagement with First Nations regarding greater collaboration and parks operations.

In 2019, the Province of BC enacted the *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act*, committing to upholding the human rights of Indigenous Peoples, and adopted a five-year action plan to advance reconciliation in tangible and measurable ways between 2022-27. Of particular relevance to regional parks and trails are: Article 11 that acknowledges Indigenous peoples have the right to practice and revitalize their cultural traditions and customs; and Article 31 that recognizes that Indigenous peoples have the right to maintain, control, protect and develop their cultural heritage, traditional knowledge and traditional cultural expressions. These articles and actions will influence how the CRD and First Nations in the region work together over the next decade.

The CRD supports the *Heritage Conservation Act* through implementation of the CRD's Protection and Conservation of Heritage Sites Policy. The CRD recognizes the historical, cultural, scientific, spiritual and educational value of archaeological sites to First Nations, local communities, academic institutions, and the public.

Regional parks encompass many cultural heritage values that may or may not benefit from formal protection but are important in telling the history of the region. The CRD seeks to connect people to place through the delivery of interpretive programs, signs and information. An interpretive program was piloted in 2021 to explore the cultural significance of the region through a First Peoples lens. This program will be expanded in 2022.



## 2.3 Physical Setting

The CRD encompasses a complex geography and climate that includes a range of rich and diverse ecosystems. Regional parks are home to a number of culturally significant plants and animals for First Nations, including camas, saskatoon berry and sword fern. The CRD is located within three Biogeoclimatic zones: Coastal Douglas-fir (CDF), Coastal Western Hemlock (CWH) and Mountain Hemlock (MH) (Map 3).

The CDF zone is home to the highest number of species and ecosystems at risk in BC, of which many are ranked globally as imperiled or critically imperiled. Only 0.3% of BC consists of CDF zone and it is the least protected zone in BC, with many of the protected areas being small, isolated parcels surrounded by development. A significant portion of the total CDF land base has been converted or altered by forestry, agriculture, mining and residential development (Map 4). There is only one subzone of CDF, recognized as CDFmm (Moist Maritime). The CRD currently protects 4% (2,850 ha) of the CDF occurring within the region, which comprises approximately 40% of the regional parks system as a whole (Appendix C).

The CWH zone covers approximately 11% of the province and is comprised of ten subzones, of which three occur within the CRD. While the CWH is relatively well protected across BC, two subzones that occur within the CRD are more heavily disturbed and less protected across their range, including CWH xm1 (very dry maritime - eastern) and CWH sm2 (very dry maritime-western). The CRD currently protects 6.4% (10,360 ha) of the region's CWH, which comprises 60% of the regional parks system (Appendix C).

The MH zone occupies approximately 4% of the province, along higher elevations (900-1,800 m above sea level) of the BC Coast. It consists of three subzones, of which only MH mm1 (moist maritime) occurs within the CRD in an area of 3,473 ha in size. The MH mm1 zone is generally well protected across BC, but is not currently protected by the regional parks system.



There are several species and ecological communities within the CRD at risk of becoming extinct. The *Species at Risk Act* (SARA) provides federal legal protection for species at risk, and their associated critical habitat, in an effort to recover the species. Critical habitat is identified under SARA to protect habitat necessary for the survival or recovery of species at risk. While SARA applies largely to federal lands, the CRD is effectively responsible for providing protection for species at risk within regional parks. The BC Ministry of Environment Conservation Data Centre conducts provincial assessments of species and ecological communities at risk. The CRD supports conservation by complying with provincial and federal legislation for at risk species and ecological communities in regional parks.

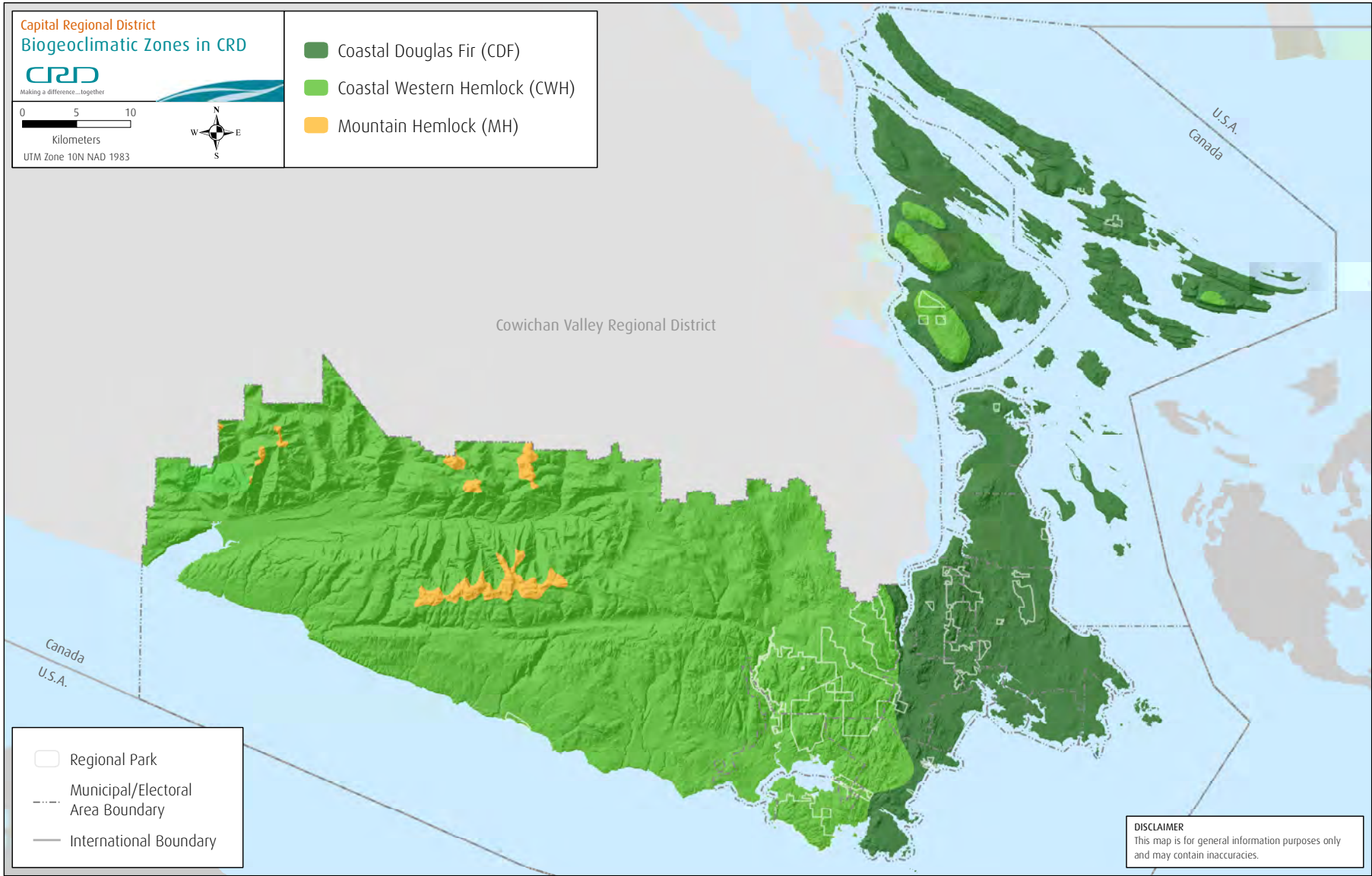
Both federally and provincially listed species at risk, and ecological communities occur across the CRD. Federally, 72 species are known or expected to occur within region parks, comprising 88% of all at-risk species across the Capital Region. Critical habitat has been proposed or confirmed for 11 of those species, covering over 60% of existing regional parks land base. Provincially, 61 species at risk and 18 ecological communities at risk occur within regional parks, comprising 51% and 78% of all species and ecological communities in the Capital Region, respectively. This data may exclude some omitted information due to privacy or data sensitivity purposes.

The region includes a mosaic of different land cover types that have changed significantly over the years. Map 4 provides a snapshot in time of the land cover categories comprising the region. The majority of regional park land is dominated by forest land cover (86%) with herb and water (lakes, streams and wetlands) comprising about 8% of regional parks. The remaining land cover in regional parks includes bedrock, grass and shrubs, and very minimal modern anthropogenic features (roads, built infrastructure). Although land cover and land use is in constant flux at the local level, the character of the region is not anticipated to change significantly on a broad scale over the next decade. The urban containment boundary identified in the CRD's Regional Growth Strategy plays a key role in protecting natural areas from outward urban expansion, as has the strategic acquisition of the green/blue belt over the past twenty years.

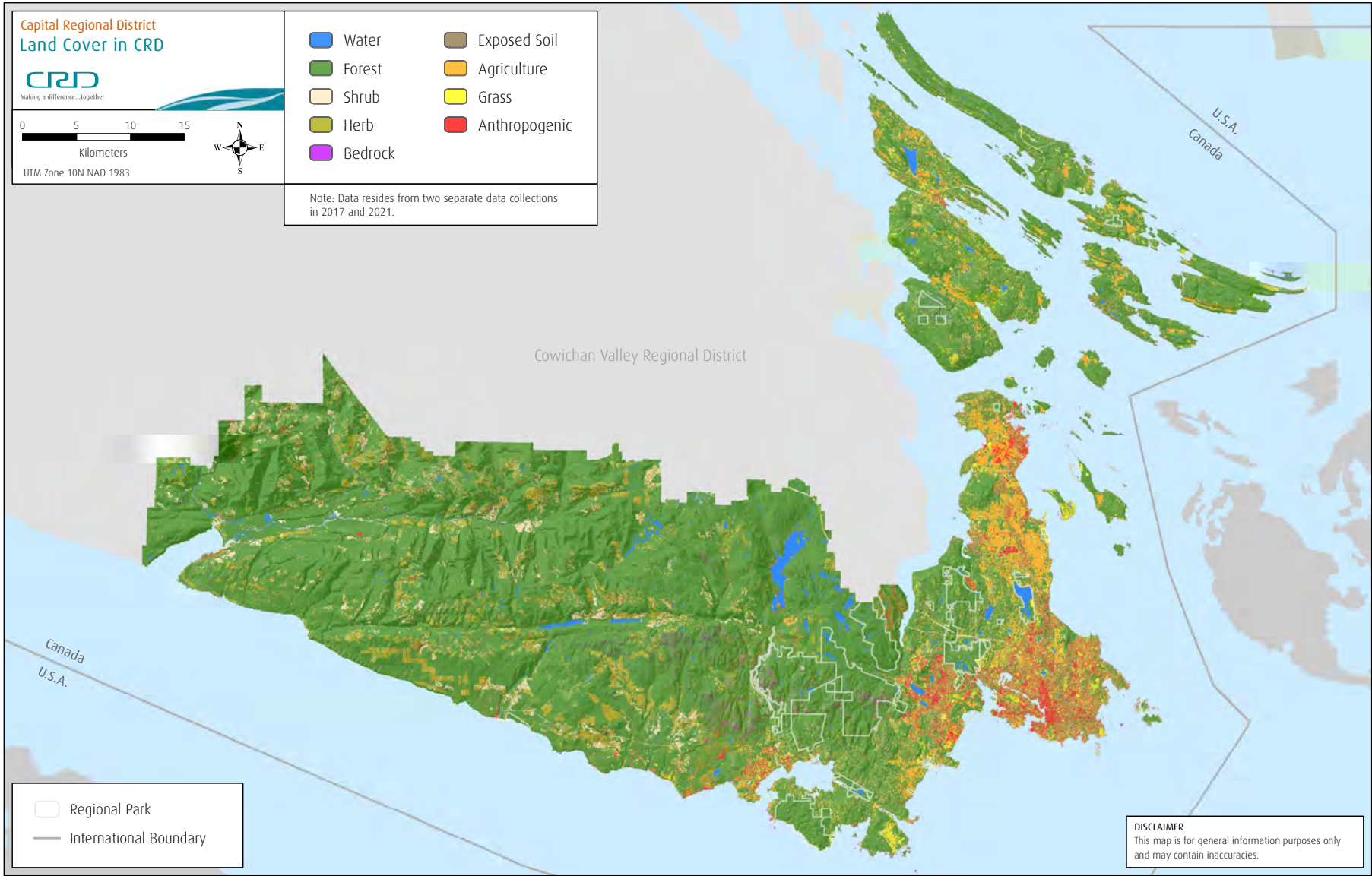
Regional parks are vulnerable to a number of stressors that threaten the ecological health, function and integrity of important ecological values, both within regional parks and the surrounding land. Threats to the region's ecological values include invasive species, hyperabundant species, urban development, industrial and agricultural land use, and significant or extreme weather events, such as fire, flood, drought, wind, and sea level rise. Ecological values are also vulnerable to pressures within regional parks related to facility development and visitor use. The CRD addresses and mitigates threats to ecological values in regional parks and trails through research, planning, active management, stewardship, monitoring and enforcement in collaboration with First Nations, community members, regional and provincial partners.



MAP 3. BIOGEOCLIMATIC ZONES IN CRD



MAP 4. LAND COVER ANALYSIS



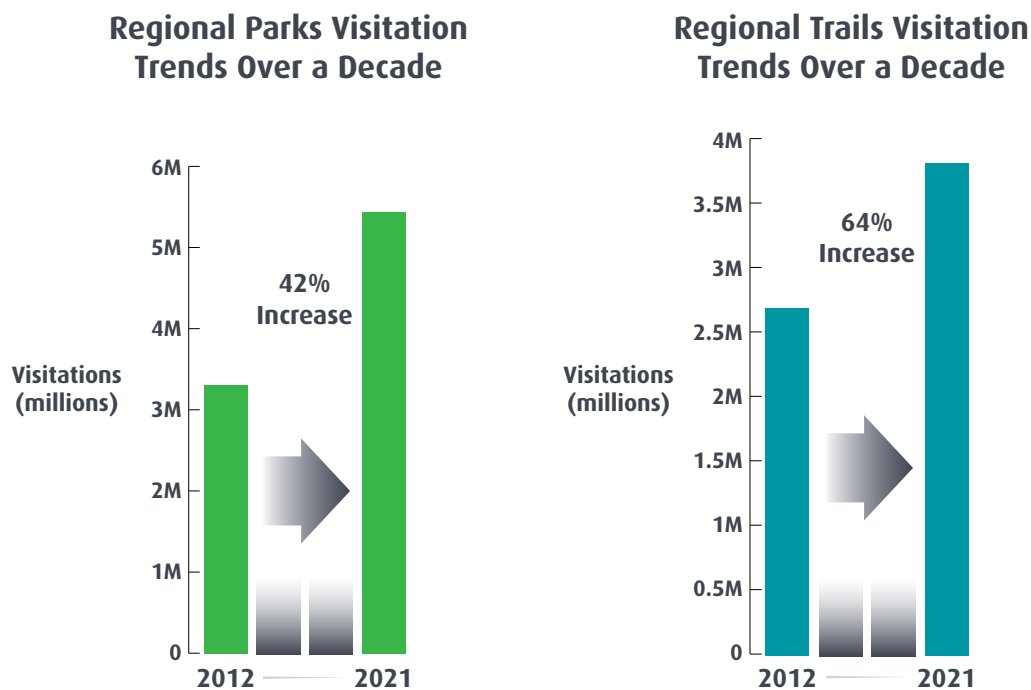
## 2.4 Visitor Experience

Regional parks and regional trails are vital to the region, supporting health and wellbeing, offering social connections, and improving quality of life. Regional parks provide over 300 kilometres (km) of trails and a range of opportunities for outdoor recreation, experiencing nature, learning about natural and cultural heritage, participating in park stewardship, and gathering for events. Regional parks primarily offer day-use activities, but there are currently three campgrounds operating in the system. The regional parks system includes near-urban, rural, and remote opportunities to access nature. Regional parks receive routine maintenance and improvements to ensure public safety, such as waste removal, vegetation clearing, and hazard assessments.

Regional trails are a separated, primarily off-street pathway system connecting urban and rural communities across the region. There are over 100 km of regional trails available for use 24 hours a day, 365 days per year. Regional trails serve as the anchor for the region's active transportation network and recreational greenway corridors.

System-wide visitation to regional parks and regional trails has increased by 54% since 2012. In 2021, regional trails received over 3.7 million visits and regional parks received over 5 million visits (Figure 4). Visitation rates are determined by a series of vehicle counters at parking lots and trail counters at various locations.

FIGURE 4. 10 YEAR VISITATION TRENDS





Residents of the region value the importance of regional parks and regional trails. The CRD's 2017 Regional Parks Resident Survey results indicate that the public supports outdoor recreation activities in regional parks provided there is no negative impact to conservation values and that the most popular recreational activities in regional parks are hiking, walking, horseback riding, cycling, camping, swimming, paddling, fishing and nature study. Regional trail use is predominantly by cyclists (80%) and pedestrians (20%) in the urban areas, with peak use to weekday morning and afternoon commute times. Regional trail use in the rural areas receives lower volumes and seasonal use, and includes cyclists, pedestrian and equestrians with peak use occurring on weekends and midday.

The CRD offers interpretive programs that deliver education and outreach about natural and cultural values in regional parks. In 2019, prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, interpretive programs reached over 3,600 students through school programs, 6,600 park visitors through public programs and park events, and over 2,000 residents through community outreach events. In addition, the CRD operates two nature centres in regional parks that are open to the public and, on average, see over 8,000 visitors a year. In 2021, the CRD piloted an interpretive program in regional parks that explores the cultural significance of the region through a First Peoples lens and is expanding the program in 2022. The CRD supports reinstating Indigenous place names through the regional park naming policy and interpretive signage.





Many opportunities are available for volunteers to be involved in regional parks and trails. The CRD offers volunteer positions as park naturalists, park stewards, mountain biking stewards, and trail ambassadors. There are also opportunities for volunteers to contribute to projects, such as park clean-ups, invasive species removal, restoration and vegetation planting. In 2021, approximately 460 volunteers committed over 5,500 hours to regional parks and trails. Additionally, the CRD holds two license agreements with community organizations for stewardship of mountain-biking trails in two regional parks. Expertise, in-kind contributions, and financial donations contribute to the overall enhancement of regional parks and regional trails and, through working with First Nations, volunteers and organizations, the CRD can strengthen connections with community members and better understand the visitor experience.

Certain uses may be allowed in regional parks and trails on a limited basis, subject to permit, as outlined in CRD Bylaw No. 3675, the “Capital Regional District Regional Parks Services and Facilities Fees and Charges Bylaw No. 1, 2010”. In 2021, 38 special event permits were issued for activities such as festivals and competitions, 63 commercial permits were issued for activities such as filming, training, dog-walking, use of picnic shelters, and research. The CRD recognizes the benefits of enhanced opportunities in regional parks and trails provided that, overall, natural areas and other park users are not negatively impacted.



The CRD delivers a compliance and enforcement program in regional parks and regional trails that emphasizes use of education to gain voluntary compliance leading to better protection of park and trail assets, safer and more enjoyable experiences, and better informed park and trail users. This work is conducted through community outreach, promotional campaigns, volunteers and the park ranger program. In 2021, park rangers conducted over 2,700 hours of patrols and CRD bylaw officers conducted over 1,800 hours of patrols to promote compliance with the “Capital Regional District Parks Regulation Bylaw No. 1, 2018”, CRD Bylaw No. 4225. While voluntary compliance far exceeds the number of ticket violations, the main infractions tend to be related to illegal parking, camping in unauthorized areas, possession of alcohol, off-leash dogs and failure to obey signs. The use of regional parks and regional trails is summarized in Figure 5.

FIGURE 5. USE IN REGIONAL PARKS AND REGIONAL TRAILS







## 2.5 Park and Trail Facilities

The CRD's system of regional parks and regional trails is comprised of both natural assets and facilities, including over 13,200 ha of land and 300 km of park trails in 32 regional parks, and approximately 100 km of paved and gravel regional trails.

The CRD's 2019 Corporate Asset Management Strategy outlines how the CRD will apply an integrated approach, evidence-based decision-making, and life cycle management to renew infrastructure and determine appropriate levels of service for regional parks and regional trails

The CRD's 2019 Regional Parks Sustainable Service Delivery Plan Report Card provides a summary of the condition of assets in regional parks and trails and a snapshot of the services' financial state to help inform a future asset renewal program and ensure appropriate levels of service delivery.

There were an estimated 273 major engineered assets in regional parks and trails in 2019. Although the majority of engineered assets in both regional parks and regional trails are in good or very good condition, infrastructure such as dams, buildings and bridges have high replacement costs, need to meet public safety standards, and are critical for continued public use. Facilities such as trails, furniture and signage have varying lifespans and renewal needs but are also essential for providing a high quality experience to visitors.

Staff plan, implement, operate and maintain infrastructure in regional parks and regional trails to provide an appropriate duty of care and deliver the service to visitors. This work requires adequate numbers of skilled staff plus equipment, vehicles and supplies. The CRD typically retains contractors to conduct more significant construction and repair projects.

## 2.6 Investment

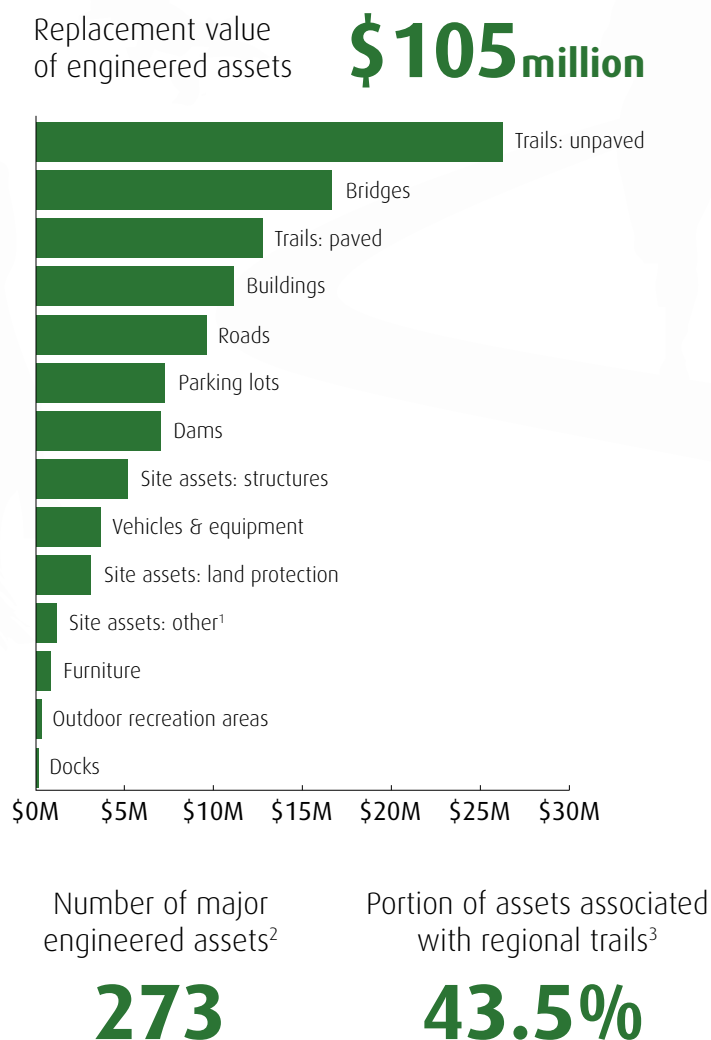
The regional parks and regional trails service is funded primarily through a regional property tax requisition. In 2022, the annual operating budget for regional parks and regional trails was \$16.7 million. The CRD Board Strategic Plan 2019-2022 prioritizes ensuring appropriate funding for parks and trails infrastructure, improvements and maintenance. The CRD Board has also endorsed the appropriateness of the property tax requisition as the primary revenue source for operating costs and continues to seek ways to relieve affordability pressure for taxpayers.

Non-tax revenue does provide a portion of the funding stream for regional parks and trails. Non-tax revenue is generated through the fees and permit provisions in CRD Bylaw No. 3675, "Capital Regional District Regional Parks Services and Facilities Fees and Charges Bylaw No. 1, 2010". Other sources of non-tax revenue may include: donations, facility rentals or lease agreements, bylaw infraction fines, and external grant funding. The CRD conducted a revenue generation review for regional parks in 2019 and determined approximately \$575,000, not including grant funding and bylaw infraction fines, was generated from non-tax sources. In 2022, non-tax revenue comprises approximately 3% of the annual budget for regional parks and trails. In 2022, tax requisition funded \$15.5 million towards the total annual operating budget of \$16.7 million. Additionally, grant funding enhances the overall budget but is dependent on available opportunities and successful applications.

The total 2019 replacement value for all built infrastructure over the current lifespan was estimated at \$105 million. The value of regional trails infrastructure costs make up over 40% of asset replacement value (approximately \$40 million) (Figure 6). These estimates were based on an estimated condition assessment and valuation of existing built assets and do not include enhanced or expanded assets already committed or contemplated in this Plan. Inflation, cost and availability of materials will continue to influence the estimated replacement value of built infrastructure. Due to these factors, the estimated 2022 replacement values for all built infrastructure in regional parks and regional trails over the current lifespan is estimated at \$120,750,000.

Additional financial resources are required to meet critical infrastructure renewal demands, as well as to address expansions to the regional parks and trails system, enhanced protection and monitoring of ecosystems and cultural heritage, improved facility design, planning, monitoring, engagement and outreach efforts. Although grant funding is typically relied upon to develop new facilities, there is increasing need to secure reliable and sustainable funds to support future enhancement to, and renewal of, regional parks and trails.

FIGURE 6. 2019 REPLACEMENT VALUE OF ENGINEERED ASSETS



<sup>1</sup>The category of Site assets: other includes water systems, sign posts and utilities.

<sup>2</sup>The total number of major and minor assets is 3,700.

<sup>3</sup>Assets in the regional trails service include asphalt and gravel pavement, bridges and culverts, fencing, pit toilets, and amenities such as rest and water stations.



## 2.7 Land Acquisition

The CRD Board established a Land Acquisition Fund (LAF) in 2000 for the sole purpose of acquiring regional park land. The LAF was initially set at a rate of \$10 per average residential household and has increased over time. In 2010, the LAF was renewed and an increase of \$1 per year was approved. In November 2019, the Board extended the LAF to 2029 at the rate of \$20 per average residential household, with rates set to increase by \$1 each year through 2025 to a maximum of \$25 per average residential household. The LAF collected approximately \$4 million in 2021 for regional park land acquisition.

The CRD's 2022 Financial Plan incorporates a new approach to land acquisition that leverages borrowing capacity to purchase land that would otherwise be unattainable on a pay-as-you-go savings model. The new borrowing-power approach recognizes that, given the current economic development reality and high land costs in the region, land acquisition decisions need to accommodate opportunistic acquisitions of important lands versus saving for a cash purchase. This financing structure is anticipated to create a revenue stream that can be used to debt service up to \$50 million of land purchases over 15 years, thereby leveraging a net increase in land values in excess of \$100 million. The financing structure is aimed at managing revenue and cash flow to increase land acquisition capacity and provide value-added service delivery. Costs incurred for the securement and development of new regional park lands are considered at time of acquisition, and when a park management plan is developed, and are brought forward as budget increases.

The CRD's Regional Parks Land Acquisition Strategy (LAS) identifies criteria for selecting desirable parcels of the land to purchase as regional park. The LAS strives to achieve a 20% contribution of land acquisition funds from partners. To date, the CRD, with support of partners, has acquired approximately 4,800 ha of land since 2000. In that time, the regional park system has grown from 8,400 ha to more than 13,200 ha.

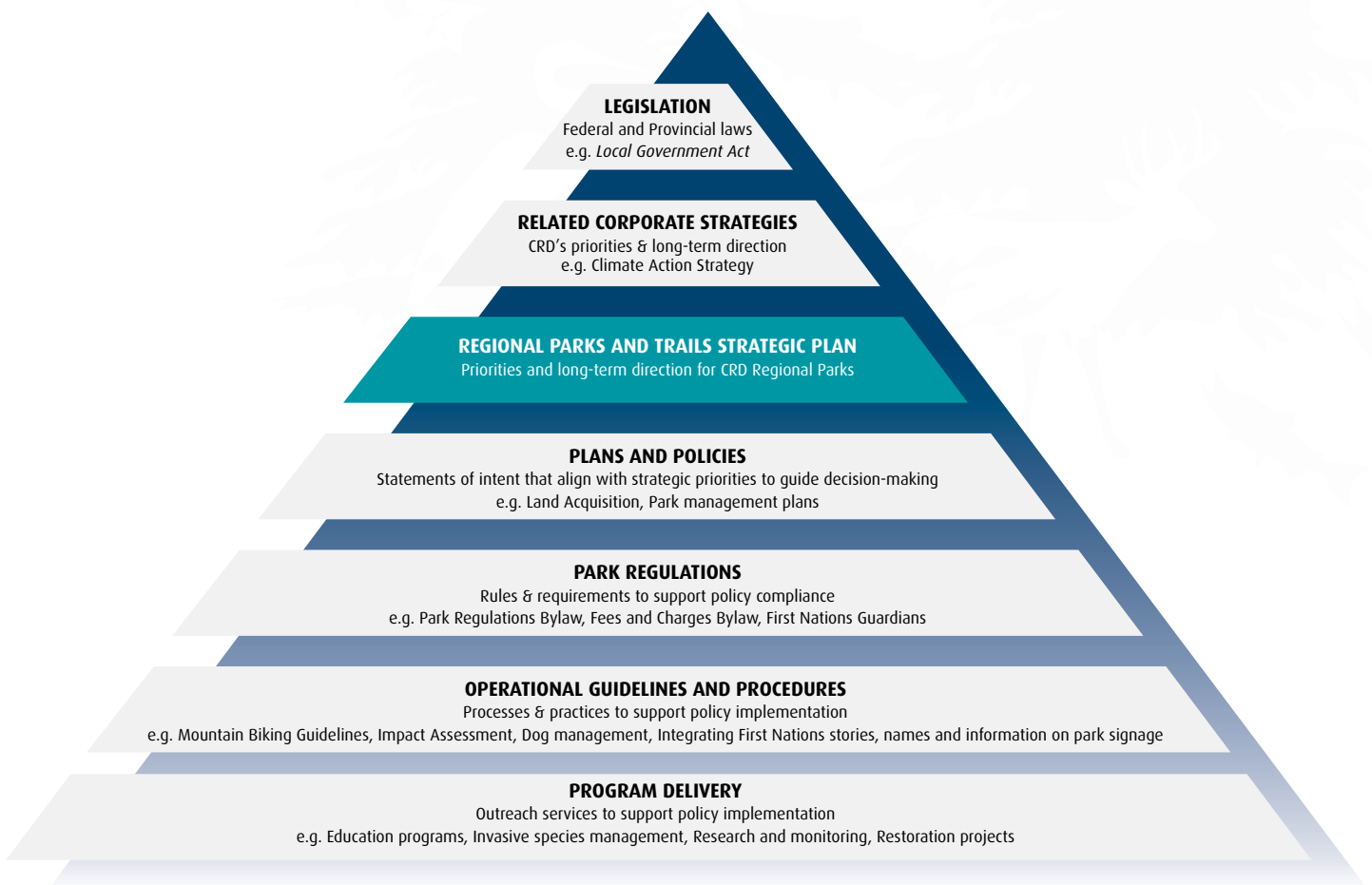
The CRD's Regional Growth Strategy (RGS) requires municipalities to identify regionally significant park lands in the municipal context statements in their Official Community Plans. The CRD is committed to having meaningful discussions with First Nations, municipal, provincial and federal parks agencies operating in the region, as well as with land conservancy organizations and other potential partners when entering into land acquisition decisions.

### 3. Planning Framework

This updated Strategic Plan will help the CRD set priorities, respond to complex challenges, and guide the organization in making decisions that move towards a desired future state for regional parks and regional trails. This Plan will benefit staff, the Regional Parks Committee, Transportation Committee and the Board in making decisions that advance the vision. The updated Strategic Plan will provide better opportunities for First Nations engagement by providing a framework for collaborating on regional parks and trails initiatives with First Nations. The updated Strategic Plan is also intended to create a greater understanding of the CRD's priorities and commitments for regional parks and regional trails going forward.

This Plan applies to the overall management of regional parks and regional trails. The Plan's vision, mission, values and principles, priorities, actions and targets will be implemented through the various plans, policies, regulations and programs guiding regional parks and regional trails (Figure 7). Where existing park plans and policies are inconsistent with the Strategic Plan, updates will be undertaken to bring them into alignment. Financial support for implementation will be determined through operating and capital budgets approved by the Board.

FIGURE 7. STRATEGIC PLAN WITHIN THE HIERARCHY OF OTHER PLANNING DOCUMENTS



Since 2012, the CRD has adopted a number of key strategies, including the Regional Growth Strategy and Climate Action Strategy, and has committed to support reconciliation with First Nations that have traditional territory in the region. This Plan reflects how the regional parks and regional trails system can support the current CRD Board priorities 2019-2022, and the initiatives identified in the related CRD strategies identified in Figure 8 (Appendix D). Related CRD strategies are available at: [www.crd.bc.ca/plans](http://www.crd.bc.ca/plans)

FIGURE 8. CRD STRATEGIES WITH STRONG LINKS TO THE REGIONAL PARKS AND TRAILS STRATEGIC PLAN







### 3.1 Regional Park Classifications

A park classification system establishes the intended purpose for each park type. The concept of establishing a spectrum of regional park classifications was first adopted in the Official Regional Park Plan, 1987, and continued in the CRD Parks Master Plan, 2000, and the Regional Parks Strategic Plan 2012-2021. The regional park classification system is established in Figure 9. Existing regional parks are classified as shown on Map 5, and Appendix E, and include: 11 Conservation Areas, 3 Wilderness Areas, and 18 Natural Recreation Area parks. Appendix E shows the current proportion of the regional parks system by classification type. A new Conservancy Area classification has been established in anticipation of emerging interests to protect natural or cultural features, primarily for their intrinsic value to First Nations. Consideration of a new park classification by the CRD Board would constitute a major amendment to this Plan. Consideration of classifying new regional park land or reclassifying existing lands by the CRD Board will constitute a minor amendment to this Plan.

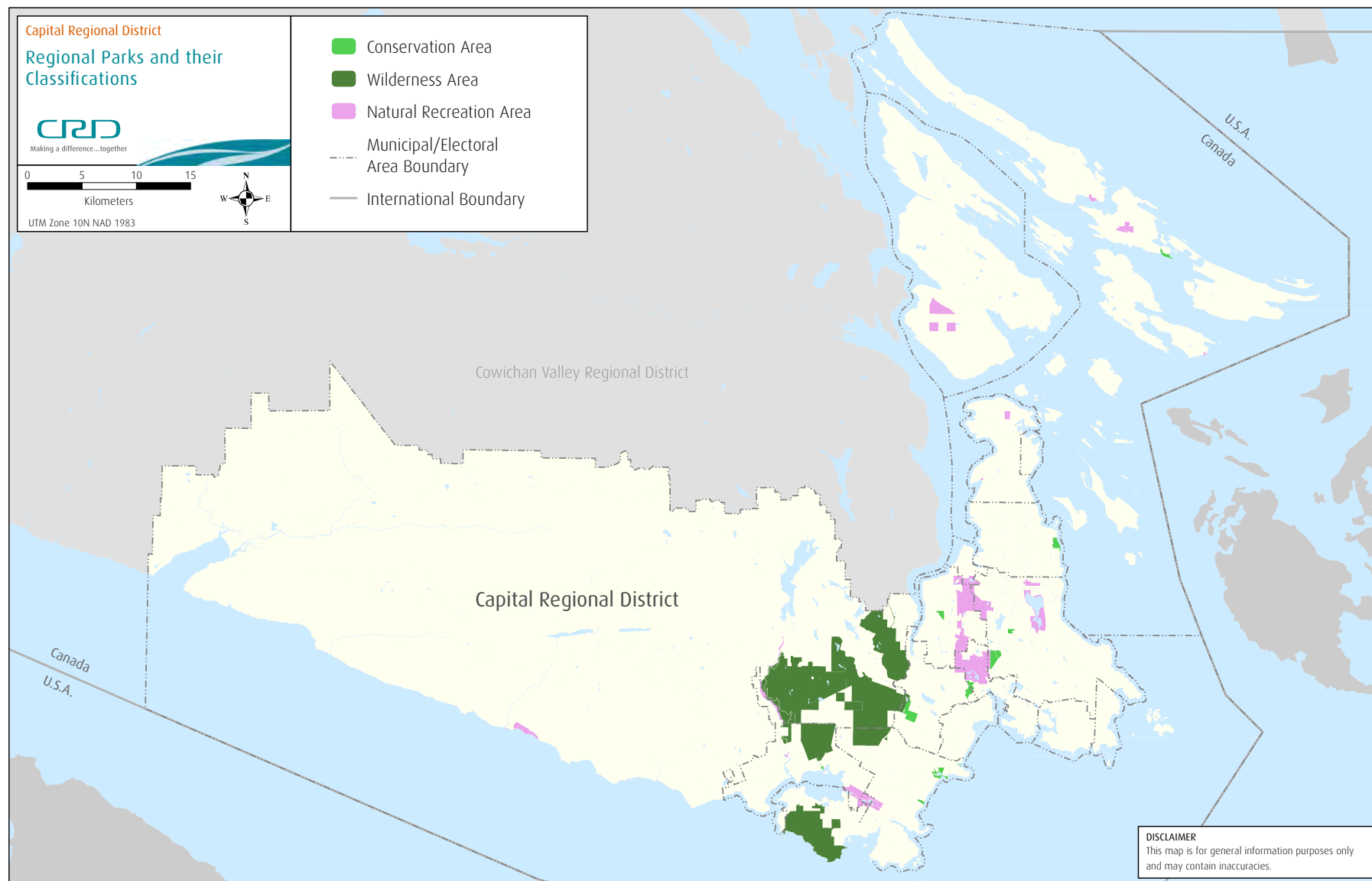
Park management plans set the policy approach for regional parks and will be reviewed and updated to align with this Plan. Of the 32 regional parks in the system in 2022, 18 have management plans, 1 has interim management guidelines, and 13 are without management plans. Of the 18 management plans, 8 have been approved within the past 15 years. Upon acquisition, a park is dedicated by bylaw and a park management plan is prepared and approved by the CRD Board to guide how that park is to be developed and what services will be offered. Park management plans that are informed by assessments of what regional park values are present, input from First Nations, stakeholder groups and the public provide a foundation for evidence-based decision-making and reflect current and future visitor use of regional parks in order to anticipate future pressures on the park and to respect interests and values. Park zoning is used to define appropriate uses, facilities and services offered within different areas of a park based on the present values. It is important that park management plans forecast challenges and opportunities that may impact a park over time, and include mitigation measures and financial considerations to guide decision-making. Regular monitoring and reporting on park management plan implementation provides accountability and transparency.

FIGURE 9. REGIONAL PARK CLASSIFICATIONS



Park Classification	Purpose
Conservation Area	To protect species or ecological communities at risk and to offer visitor experiences that are primarily focused on interpretation of natural and cultural features.
Wilderness Area	To protect large, connected tracts of natural areas and to offer visitor experiences that are primarily focused on remote and secluded outdoor recreation activities.
Conservancy Area	To protect natural assets and areas primarily for their intrinsic cultural use value where there is a traditional use agreement in place and to offer visitor experiences that enhance understanding and appreciation for Indigenous cultural use.
Natural Recreation Area	To protect a connected system of natural areas and to offer visitor experiences that are primarily focused on outdoor recreation activities.

MAP 5. REGIONAL PARK CLASSIFICATIONS





## 3.2 Regional Trail Classifications

A trail classification system establishes the intended purpose for each regional trail type. This Plan builds on the regional trail classification system established in the Regional Parks Strategic Plan 2012-2021 and is established in Figure 10. Existing regional trails are classified as shown on Map 6 and include: Urban Bike and Pedestrian and Rural Bike and Pedestrian. Consideration of a new trail classification by the CRD Board would constitute a major amendment to this Plan. Consideration of classifying new regional trails or reclassifying existing regional trails by the CRD Board will constitute a minor amendment to this Plan.

The CRD's 2016 Regional Trails Management Plan and 2018 Gulf Islands Regional Trails Management Plan set the current policy approach for regional trails and will be reviewed and updated to align with this Plan. Regional trail management plans are prepared to guide how regional trails will be developed and what facilities are offered. Regional trail management plans are informed by the classification system, as well as by related strategies such as the CRD's 2014 Regional Transportation Plan, input from First Nations, interest groups and the public, and are approved by the CRD Board. It is important the regional trail management plans forecast challenges and opportunities that may impact the regional trails over time and include financial considerations to guide decision-making. Regular monitoring and reporting on regional trail management plan implementation provides accountability and transparency.



Selkirk Trestle - Galloping Goose Regional Trail



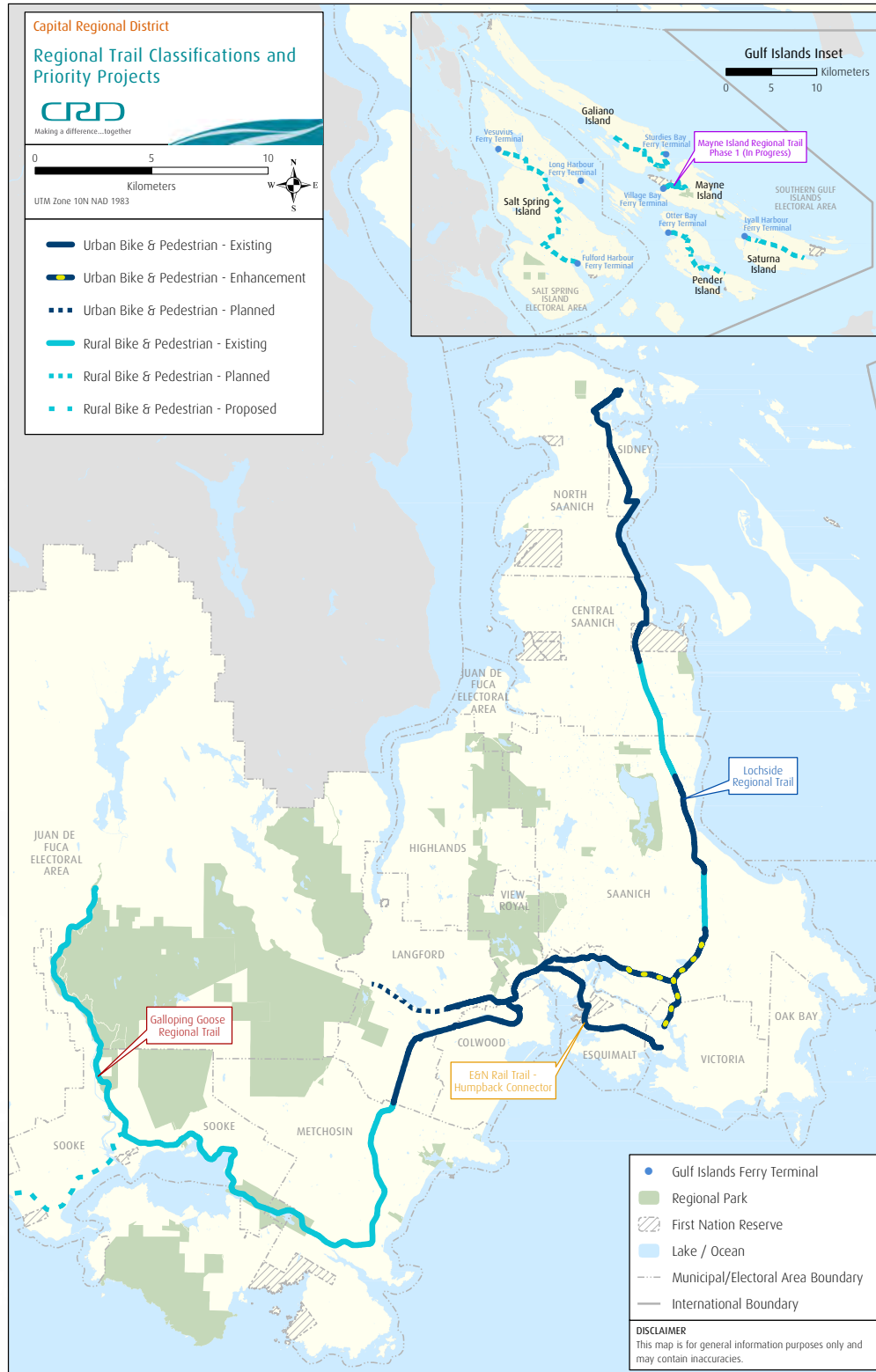
Credit: Bill Irvine

FIGURE 10. REGIONAL TRAIL CLASSIFICATIONS



Park Classification	Purpose
Urban Bike & Pedestrian	To provide an off-street trail corridor in urban areas that is primarily for high volumes of active transportation at peak travel times and accommodates regular recreational use. Trail separation and lighting design standards will be applied to areas with high user volumes and greater trail user differential.
Rural Bike & Pedestrian	To provide an off-street trail corridor in rural areas that is primarily for active transportation and recreation with higher volumes during the summer season and on weekends. Trail design will be dual-direction, shared use with gravel surface, except in areas of higher user volumes or on-street separated facilities, where a paved surface may be considered.

MAP 6. REGIONAL TRAIL CLASSIFICATIONS AND PRIORITY PROJECTS







Lochside Regional Trail

The CRD recognizes there are competing priorities for enhancing and expanding the regional trails network. The following priority projects are identified for the upcoming decade and are shown on Map 6:

- Enhance Urban Bike & Pedestrian trails in high use sections with a separated use pathway and lighting;
- Complete the E&N regional trail;
- Develop the Gulf Islands regional trail network;
- Plan for and develop an extension of the Galloping Goose to connect to Sooke and the Juan de Fuca Electoral Area.

The following criteria will be applied when prioritizing planning, enhancing and expanding the regional trails system:

- Tenure is established for the route corridor;
- Route has a greenway character that is primarily separated from motor-vehicle traffic;
- Route addresses an existing gap in the network that connects to communities;
- Public safety, regulatory requirements and critical infrastructure renewal takes precedent over regional trail expansion projects;
- User volume and user type differential data will inform where enhancements are prioritized;
- Enhancement projects can align with other planned work;
- Funding is secured.

The following guiding principles will be applied to minimize service disruptions on regional trails whenever possible:

- Isolate worksite to allow regional trail to remain open during the work activity;
- Minimize footprint of work site;
- Schedule work activity outside of peak visitation times;
- Provide early and ongoing communication to users;
- Provide a higher standard of care for detours on Urban Bike and Pedestrian trails.





## 4. Strategic Priorities

Strategic Priorities have been developed to guide the CRD towards its desired vision for regional parks and regional trails. The Strategic Priorities are presented in the following theme categories: Reconciliation; Conservation; Visitor Experience; Climate Action & Resiliency; Access & Equity. Supporting actions and timelines for implementation are provided for each priority.



# Reconciliation

**Goal 1:** Strong, collaborative and mutually beneficial relationships with First Nations through working in partnership.

This Regional Parks and Trails Strategic Plan is a refreshed outlook on strengthening government-to-government relationships and understanding between the CRD and First Nations in the region.

The CRD commits to maintain an open dialogue with First Nations to confirm that Indigenous cultural values and cultural uses are respected and that the priorities and actions remain relevant and meaningful. The Plan will support ongoing engagement with First Nations in the operation of regional parks and regional trails in years to come. Currently, CRD staff are participating in training to better understand Indigenous harvesting rights and practices in regional parks. Work is also underway to formalize traditional use agreements with First Nations to better recognize traditional harvesting rights. At the same time, it is recognized that reconciliation initiatives will be long-lasting and evolve over time.

The CRD's Truth and Reconciliation Calls to Action Dashboard highlights a number of areas where the CRD can focus program or policy development in regional parks and regional trails to support reconciliation. The CRD recognizes that each First Nation has individual interests, needs and capacity to engage in these initiatives. In addition to the reconciliation goal and supporting priorities and actions identified here, this Plan identifies many priorities and actions related to working with First Nations.

The CRD will work with First Nations as Treaty settlements are committed and as the *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act* and action plan is implemented. The CRD supports working with First Nations on common interests and recognizes that how this is achieved will be an ongoing discussion with each First Nation and will evolve as priorities, capacities, and governance structures shift over time. This Plan supports the journey towards strengthened relationships with First Nations and overall increased cultural awareness and respect to improve management of regional parks and trails.



Culturally Modified Tree

The inner bark of the western red cedar is harvested in the spring from the sunrise side of the tree to encourage healing. The bark is then prepared for weaving by soaking it in water and beating it between two stones. It can then be woven into baskets, blankets, mats and hats.



### Priority 1-1

Incorporate First Nation worldviews and knowledge in the ongoing management and operation of regional parks and regional trails.

Actions	Timing
1-1a Work with First Nations to develop and implement priority initiatives related to regional parks and regional trails, such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Integrating First Nations stories, names and other information on park and trail signage and communications material;</li><li>• Recognizing traditional place names;</li><li>• Developing cooperative management agreements, traditional use protocols and access agreements;</li><li>• Information sharing;</li><li>• Involving First Nations in land acquisition and park management planning and operations.</li></ul>	Ongoing
1-1b Develop a policy for supporting and clarifying Indigenous cultural use and cultural safety in regional parks.	Short-term

### Priority 1-2

Work with First Nations Governments in service delivery initiatives.

Actions	Timing
1-2a Encourage and invite First Nations interpreters in regional parks.	Ongoing
1-2b Partner with First Nations in conservation and restoration projects.	Ongoing
1-2c Support First Nations guardians in the region.	Ongoing
1-2d Support business relations with First Nations that provide value-added and compatible services in regional parks and regional trails, such as campground operations.	Ongoing



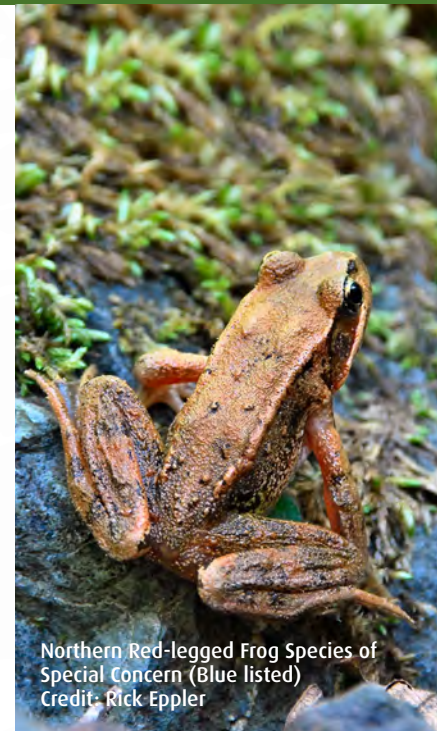
# Conservation

**Goal 2:** Regional parks protect the region's natural assets and cultural heritage for future generations

Regional parks contribute to a large system of connected natural areas that protect natural assets, maintain ecological health, function and integrity, and provide important refuge for a diversity of species, from the threatened blue-grey tailed slug to large carnivores, including wolves, bears and cougars. This complex and diverse system of protected areas is vital to ensuring long-term viability of natural areas, conserving biodiversity and building resilience to changing climates and increasing pressures on the landscape.

Regional parks also contribute to the protection of the region's cultural heritage and archaeological sites protected under the *Heritage Conservation Act*. These sites are culturally significant to First Nations and to post-contact settler history of the region. Careful protection and monitoring of these sites is important to ensure impacts from visitor use and climate change do not degrade their integrity. The CRD's Protection and Conservation of Heritage Sites Policy provides protocol and procedure for ground-altering works near registered archaeological sites and in areas of high potential. Increased staff awareness and involvement by First Nations in the assessment of these sites allows for traditional knowledge to be incorporated into efforts to protect these sites in perpetuity.

New approaches have been adopted by local governments across Canada to recognize that natural assets, such as forests, wetlands, lakes and streams, can provide equivalent or better services compared to engineered facilities, and at reduced costs. Through conservation efforts, the region can sustain ecosystem goods, such as clean air and water, and ecosystem services, such as nutrient cycling, water storage and purification. Important social, cultural and spiritual values can also be improved through natural asset management.



Northern Red-legged Frog Species of Special Concern (Blue listed)  
Credit: Rick Eppler

The Northern Red-legged Frog *Rana aurora* can be found in many CRD Regional Parks. Frogs are often an indicator species, and when their numbers decline, it is often a sign of declining ecosystem health overall. Currently, the Northern Red-legged Frog is provincially listed as special concern in British Columbia. It is designated as a species of Special Concern in Canada.

The CRD's regional parks currently protect a number of important natural assets that provide beneficial ecosystem goods and services. Ensuring ecological health and integrity of natural assets over the long term is challenging as stressors on the park system increase, such as higher visitor use and extreme weather events related to climate change. Understanding the current ecological values and health status of regional parks is fundamental to their effective management and protection. Across the region, information about the ecology of the landscape has been documented for many years. The Sensitive Ecosystems Inventory (SEI) was conducted for East Vancouver Island and the Gulf Islands from 1993-97, and updated in 2002, providing information on rare and fragile terrestrial ecosystems. In 2008, Terrestrial Ecosystem Mapping was conducted across the CDF biogeoclimatic zone to further refine and categorize ecosystems identified in the SEI and update standards for data collection and mapping. Other information on ecological values across the CRD that supports conservation planning includes Predictive Ecosystem Mapping, Vegetation Resource Inventory and forestry data, soil mapping, terrain mapping and a number of resources on sea level rise and climate data. Additionally, many research projects have been conducted within regional parks that provide relevant local ecological information.

Traditional Ecological Knowledge is another important source of information that allows First Nations communities to apply their knowledge and practices to help protect their way of life. This knowledge is often specific to a location and includes the relationships between plants, animals, natural phenomena, landscapes and timing of events that are used for lifeways, including but not limited to fishing, hunting, trapping, berry picking, medicinal plant use, agriculture and forestry.

On a global scale, the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity created a Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 that aimed to achieve global protection of at least 17% of terrestrial and inland water and 10% of coastal and marine areas. Other ambitious movements to halt loss of global biodiversity are being undertaken by organizations, including the European Union, International Union for Conservation of Nature and the High Ambition Coalition, aiming to achieve protection of at least 30% of the planet's land and water. Canada is also working to conserve 25% of the nation's land and water by 2025 and 30% by 2030.

The CRD partners with organizations to protect and conserve important species and habitats across the region. A number of local, regional, provincial and federal organizations have identified priorities and best practices for regional conservation planning, such as: the Nature Conservancy of Canada Salish Sea Natural Area Conservation Plan; the Coastal Douglas-fir and Associated Ecosystems Conservation Partnership Conservation Strategy 2015-2020; 2014 Local Government Tools Supporting Species and Ecosystems at Risk Resource Guide for South Coast of BC; and Islands Trust Conservancy Regional Conservation Plan 2018-2027.



The CRD's Regional Growth Strategy aims to protect the region's landscape character, natural heritage and biodiversity by protecting, conserving and managing lands in accordance with the guiding principles of prioritizing ecosystem health and recognizing the benefits derived from healthy ecosystems. The CRD Board Priorities for 2019-2022 reinforce the need to protect and enhance the region's natural areas to achieve environmental resilience. The CRD can directly support the protection and enhancement of the region's natural areas and cultural heritage through park land acquisition, research, monitoring and restoration.

Conservation efforts require a coordinated approach at global, national, provincial and local levels and to include traditional ecological knowledge. The CRD aims to use the most current information, both within the parks system and at a regional scale, to support monitoring and protection of ecological and cultural heritage values over time. An approach that strengthens partnerships and supports evidence-based and transparent decision-making is critical in supporting conservation priorities in regional parks. The CRD will take a leadership role to proactively manage, restore, and protect ecological and cultural values, in regional parks and to support broader conservation efforts in the region.



Deltoid balsamroot  
Listed as Endangered under the Species at Risk Act  
Credit: Andrea Rangel

## Priority 2-1

Take action to increase protection of biodiversity, ecological integrity and natural assets in the region through improved knowledge, proactive stewardship, and land acquisition.

Actions	Timing
2-1a Complete a State of Natural Values in Regional Parks Report that includes: a review of existing ecological values and an assessment of the ecological health in regional parks.	Short-term
2-1b Prepare and implement a Natural Areas Conservation Plan that includes: an analysis of current and future ecological data needs, including traditional ecological knowledge; goals and targets for research, protection, restoration and enhancement, and watershed management; impact mitigation strategies and methods for long-term monitoring and reporting.	Medium-term
2-1c Protect, restore, enhance and mitigate impacts to important habitat and sensitive ecosystems in regional parks by developing and implementing Impact Assessment and Best Management Practice Guidelines that are informed by research and incorporate traditional ecological knowledge.	Short-term
2-1d Develop a set of Demand Management Tools to mitigate ecological, cultural and recreation carrying capacity in regional parks.	Medium-term
2-1e Support global, national and local conservation targets by increasing protection of the region's large and connected natural areas, rare and at-risk species and ecosystems, natural assets, and representation of diverse ecosystems.	Long-term
2-1f Restore and enhance disturbed and fragmented habitats and ecosystems within regional parks.	Ongoing

## Priority 2-2

Respect and protect cultural heritage sites and traditional cultural use practices.

Actions	Timing
2-2a Ensure parks staff receive training to improve understanding of cultural heritage conservation and Indigenous cultural use in regional parks.	Ongoing
2-2b Invite and incorporate First Nations knowledge in the implementation of the CRD's Protection and Conservation of Heritage Sites Policy in regional parks.	Medium-term
2-2c In partnership with First Nations, develop Cultural Heritage Protection Plans to identify, protect and monitor cultural heritage sites in regional parks.	Long-term

## Priority 2-3

Work with partners in taking care of the region's species, habitats and natural areas.

Actions	Timing
2-3a Support, collaborate, participate and lead initiatives to share knowledge with First Nations, other levels of government, institutions and organizations on regional topics of conservation, biodiversity, species at risk, restoration, and invasive species management.	Ongoing
2-3b Enhance opportunities to and improve regional conservation knowledge by collaborating with partners to share open, transparent and accessible information on the region's natural values while respecting First Nations traditional ecological knowledge and information sharing protocols.	Long-term
2-3c Proactively seek, support and lead partnership opportunities.	Long-term
2-3d Work with First Nations to understand and monitor plants and animals of significance to Indigenous cultural use in regional parks.	Ongoing





# Visitor Experience

**Goal 3:** Visitors to regional parks are involved in stewardship and have enjoyable outdoor recreation experiences

Outdoor recreation opportunities play an important role in the quality of life that attracts people to this region, benefiting mental and physical health, promoting social and community connectivity, and being relatively low-barrier to access. The motivating factors, or user objectives, for visiting regional parks and trails is unique to each individual and depends on the characteristics of the recreation setting. The CRD aims to support a fit for life approach in regional parks by providing a range of different opportunities for broad public use while supporting and protecting ecological values. Regional parks offer a range of visitor use experiences that benefit broad public enjoyment and that are compatible with other park users and with the natural setting.

## **Compatible outdoor activities** in regional parks:

- Are immersed in the natural environment;
- Do not degrade the ecological integrity of the park;
- Are human-powered;
- Encourage an appreciation for and understanding of natural and cultural; and
- Do not significantly interfere with the enjoyment of other park users.

## **Non-compatible outdoor activities** in regional parks:

- Require substantial artificial or built infrastructure;
- Significantly degrade areas of archaeological and cultural importance;
- Do not inspire an appreciation for nature;
- Interfere with the experience of other park or trail users;
- Generate greenhouse gas emissions, pollution, noise or other noxious substances; and
- Permanent commercial or non-park or trail uses.



These visitors are well prepared for a challenging hike over rugged terrain in Sea to Sea Regional Park.



With the increasing popularity of outdoor recreation come challenges for meeting user objectives, including ensuring safety, mitigating environmental damage, and resolving conflict between users. Providing quality outdoor recreation experiences can have positive impacts on increasing environmental and cultural awareness, enhancing stewardship values, and promoting user etiquette and compliance. Opportunities to encourage outdoor recreation, through group training, competitions and events supported through the permit program, are recognized as positive contributions to promoting healthy lifestyles, fostering social connections, and providing economic benefit to the region, provided such activities are sited appropriately and remain secondary to broad public use of regional parks and trails.

The involvement of not-for-profit organizations in stewardship of regional parks and trails can be mutually beneficial. Through formal agreements, organizations may contribute expertise, labour and materials to maintenance and restoration projects that result in improved facility design and user experience, and contribute by disseminating information through their membership. Stewardship opportunities in regional parks and trails offer participants an opportunity to develop a deeper understanding of park management challenges, such as human impacts on the natural environment. The CRD invites guidance in these efforts from First Nations, as long-term stewards of the land and water.

Interpretive programs offered in regional parks have a positive effect on educating the public about natural and cultural values and connect people with nature. Programs can be further improved through incorporating First Nations world views. Continued emphasis on interpretive programming and communication material, especially aimed at youth, can encourage a new generation of stewards. Effective communication and messaging, through in-person and media outlets, can also increase public awareness of human impacts on the environment, improve users' preparedness for participating in outdoor activities, and increase awareness of regional park values. Consistent messaging can also target improved behaviour of regional parks and trail users, rather than relying on compliance and enforcement. Over time, rates of voluntary compliance with park regulations are expected to increase, as a result of improved communication and education efforts.

Continued engagement with park users helps the CRD to understand visitor use trends in regional parks. In addition, data sources, such as vehicle and trail counters and resident surveys, inform planning and operational decisions that enhance enjoyment of regional parks.

### Priority 3-1

Offer compatible outdoor recreation experiences that are enjoyable, healthy, safe and immersed in nature.

Actions	Timing
3-1a Develop and implement an Outdoor Recreation Plan that takes into account a range of desired user experiences, user objectives, compatibility, recreation setting characteristics, and establishes a method for long-term monitoring and reporting.	Short-term
3-1b Develop, update and implement Facility Standards and Outdoor Recreation Activity-Specific Guidelines that establish design standards, risk mitigation, and level of service requirements.	Medium-term
3-1c Undertake Resident Surveys to assess visitor use satisfaction and emerging trends related to regional parks.	Every 5 years
3-1d Update Park Use Permit opportunities giving consideration to Indigenous cultural safety, protection of cultural heritage and ecosystem integrity, park land carrying capacity, park classifications, equity, and non-tax revenue generation needs.	Medium-term
3-1e Update Emergency Response Plans for regional parks.	Ongoing
3-1f Expand compatible outdoor recreation opportunities in previously disturbed areas or areas with lower conservation values.	Long-term

### Priority 3-2

Foster stewardship through program delivery, knowledge sharing and collaboration.

Actions	Timing
3-2a Develop and implement an Interpretive Program Plan and provide programs, that deliver natural and cultural heritage information, climate change education, promote health benefits of nature-based activities, and visitor compliance.	Medium-term
3-2b Develop a Volunteer Plan that includes a diversity of opportunities for individuals and organizations to participate in and contribute to regional parks.	Medium-term
3-2c Work with First Nations to provide park visitors with information about First Nations history and cultural use, and to improve cultural safety in parks.	Ongoing





# Climate Action & Resiliency

**Goal 4:** Regional parks and regional trails are resilient and take action on climate change

The CRD Board declared a climate emergency in 2019 and has since committed to take action to address climate change within operations at the regional level and to take a leadership role to pursue carbon neutrality. The CRD's 2021 Climate Action Strategy recognizes that greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions must be reduced and sequestered. In order to respond to climate impacts, efforts must focus on understanding vulnerabilities, ensuring natural assets are resilient and ecological integrity is maintained, and preparing the region's infrastructure and lands.

The CRD can contribute to regional GHG reductions in regional parks and trails by integrating the corporate climate lens framework, making operational choices that reduce GHG emissions, and through the planning, design, and operation of the regional trails system, which serves as the anchor of the region's active transportation network. The CRD's 2014 Regional Transportation Plan put forth a multi-modal transportation network concept for the region that includes sections of regional trails functioning as separated, off-street active transportation corridors. Canada's Active Transportation Strategy, BC's South Island Transportation Plan and the CRD's Regional Growth Strategy target increased active transportation as a personal mobility choice and for enhancing individuals' health and wellbeing. As almost half of the region's GHG emissions come from transportation, the CRD can directly support a shift to low-carbon mobility choices by accelerating infrastructure improvements in regional parks and regional trails that support active transportation and low-carbon mobility choices.

Natural areas provide important ecosystem goods and services, such as carbon storage, water supply and temperature buffering functions, as well as improve resilience to extreme weather events. The CRD can manage ecosystem health and integrity in regional parks to support nature's capacity to mitigate against and adapt to a changing climate. This can be done through acquiring new lands, actively managing and restoring natural areas, building community awareness on climate action, and providing opportunities to engage in stewardship activities.



Yellow Sand-verbena  
Species of Special Concern (Blue listed)  
Credit: Sean Rangel

Yellow Sand-verbena *Abronia latifolia* is a Species of Special Concern that grows in coastal sandy habitats. This flowering plant is the sole source of food for the endangered Sand-verbena Moth, which is dependent on the plant for every stage of its life. Both species face further peril from rising sea levels due to climate change.

Extreme weather events such as flooding, drought and fire could have severe long-term detrimental effects on the regional parks land base, values, and fragile resources, such as archaeological sites, rare and sensitive ecosystems, outdoor recreation spaces, and critical infrastructure and facilities. Understanding and preparing for possible climate impacts to regional parks and regional trails is critical to assessing climate mitigation and adaptation measures and to making informed decisions. Information sharing and incorporating traditional ecological knowledge can further inform climate action and adaptation decisions, thereby increasing resiliency.

Effectively achieving the vision for regional parks and regional trails in the face of increased regional population growth, urban development pressure, changing visitor use expectations and use patterns, and major infrastructure renewal needs requires substantial investment and effective financial management. There are significant funding challenges and competing priorities for expenditures relating to acquiring and opening new parks, upgrading and replacing existing infrastructure, and funding programs to plan and manage the regional parks and trails system. Funding existing and future service delivery demands is also a challenge as the region becomes increasingly diverse and is exposed to disruptive and unpredictable events due to climate change.

Resident surveys conducted in 2017 provided evidence that the public supported an increase in funding to operate regional parks and regional trails and for continuation of the Land Acquisition Fund. These opinions about the level of funding demonstrate support for funding the following priorities over the next five years: repair and maintenance of facilities, environmental restoration projects, and acquisition of more parkland.

The CRD applies an asset management approach to build organizational resilience. Fundamental to adopting an asset management approach is ensuring consistent, systematic and standardized information about facilities to inform decision-making. The CRD embarked on an asset management program with the Regional Parks Sustainable Service Delivery Report Card in 2019, which focused on critical infrastructure renewal needs. Further development of an asset management program will assist with managing each facility's life cycle and determining appropriate levels of service and risk. Consideration can also be given to determining the feasibility of broadening the scope of asset management to include natural assets in the regional parks system.

It is important to balance the capacity of the CRD to operate and manage the system in a fiscally responsible manner, while continuing to expand and improve service, and to balance risks and benefits. In 2019, the CRD Board made it a priority to ensure appropriate funding for regional parks and trails infrastructure, improvements and maintenance. On finalization of this Strategic Plan, a financial plan will be prepared that will comprehensively address all aspects of the funding necessary for the CRD to achieve its vision for regional parks and regional trails.

## Priority 4-1

Advance regional active transportation opportunities that contribute to greenhouse gas reduction.

Actions	Timing
4-1a Update the Regional Trails Management Plan with consideration to regional trail classifications, design standards, priority regional trail projects, and increasing connectivity.	Short-term
4-1b Plan for and implement priority regional trail enhancement and expansion projects.	Ongoing
4-1c Prepare a funding strategy to support implementation of priority regional trail enhancement and expansion projects.	Short-term
4-1d Work with municipalities to develop and implement Operational Guidelines for regional trail service disruptions.	Short-term
4-1e Develop and implement a Micromobility Policy that gives consideration to the use of electric micromobility devices, such as electric-assist bikes and electric scooters, in regional parks and regional trails.	Medium-term
4-1f Support, participate and collaborate in the planning and implementation of a regional active transportation network that improves connectivity, identifies system gaps, and establishes desired design standards and service levels.	Ongoing



Sea to Sea Regional Park  
Credit: Mary Sanseverino



## Priority 4-2

Support the development of complete and connected communities by improving access to regional parks by transit, electric vehicles, micromobility, walking or cycling.

Actions	Timing
4-2a Advocate for expanded transit service to regional parks.	Ongoing
4-2b Align implementation of parking fees where regional parks can be easily accessed by transit, walking or cycling as a disincentive to motor vehicle use, excluding vehicle parking for people with disabilities.	Short-term
4-2c Prioritize regional park and regional trail projects that improve multi-modal access between parks and communities.	Ongoing
4-2d Undertake a study of regional parks access points to inform parking lot safety improvements, multi-modal access, and low-carbon mobility incentives.	Medium-term
4-2e Plan for and implement Electric Vehicle and Electric Micromobility charging stations at high-use regional park accesses.	Medium-term

## Priority 4-3

Align service delivery and infrastructure improvements in regional parks and regional trails with climate action.

Actions	Timing
4-3a Incorporate a Climate Action Lens into service delivery, facility development and asset renewal that prioritizes low-carbon and energy efficient investment in regional parks and regional trails.	Medium-term
4-3b Determine the feasibility of considering natural assets in an asset management plan for regional parks.	Long-term
4-3c Develop and implement an Asset Management Plan for regional parks and regional trails that achieves critical infrastructure life cycle renewal, is well-planned, managed, and funded, is consistent with legislative requirements and receives First Nations input.	Medium-term
4-3d Conduct a Service Level Review of regional trails to understand current levels of service, forecast emerging needs and required adjustments.	Medium-term



CRD Regional Parks crew putting out a fire.

#### Priority 4-4

Ensure the long-term and consistent management of regional parks and protected natural areas.

Actions	Timing
4-4a Implement a Park Management Planning Process that is efficient, adaptable, evidence-based, and addresses service level needs, financial implications and climate mitigation measures.	Ongoing
4-4b Engage and involve First Nations governments, stakeholders and the public in the preparation and implementation of park management plans to ensure transparency, knowledge sharing and adaptability.	Ongoing
4-4c Support protection of the CRD's Greater Victoria Water Supply Area from unauthorized activities, incompatible adjacent land uses, and from climate-related weather events through park management, land acquisition and sharing information.	Ongoing
4-4d Work with partners to share knowledge, assess and identify options to improve regional parks capacity to mitigate against and adapt to a changing climate, including ecosystem services such as carbon sequestration, water storage, and buffering severe weather events.	Medium-term
4-4e Support monitoring of ecosystem health in the CRD's Greater Victoria Water Supply Area and investigate expanding to regional parks.	Ongoing



## Priority 4-5

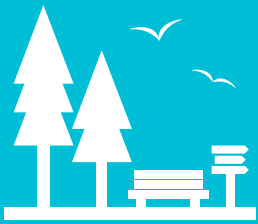
Strategically acquire and manage natural areas to address climate mitigation, urban containment, and access to green space for a growing population.

Actions	Timing
4-5a Work with First Nations, Municipalities and Electoral Areas, and organizations to identify regionally significant parkland and determine alignment of goals and objectives.	Ongoing
4-5b Work with First Nations to update land acquisition criteria to incorporate cultural use values and areas of cultural significance.	Short-term
4-5c Update regional park land acquisition criteria and prioritize land acquisition that reflects CRD Regional Parks values, including consideration of areas that contribute to climate change mitigation, enhance biodiversity, buffer urban development, increase connectivity of natural areas, improve ecological integrity, and provide increased area and diversity of outdoor recreation opportunities.	Ongoing
4-5d Support the long-term protection of the region's natural assets through inventories, monitoring, land acquisition and partnerships.	Ongoing



Volunteers removing invasive species in Mill Hill Regional Park





# Access & Equity

**Goal 5:** Regional parks and regional trails are inclusive and accessible

Regional parks and regional trails are a public good that belong to everyone in the region. The benefits of experiencing and interacting with nature for physical and mental well-being are felt by many. Medical professionals from the World Health Organization to Doctors of BC are advocating for equitable access to nature to safeguard the physical and psychological wellbeing of residents. Factors such as lack of access to transportation and proximity to parks can be barriers preventing members of society from enjoying the benefits of parks and trails. Increased benefits of accessing nature and public spaces can be realized when they adapt to the needs of diverse populations, such as people of all ages, ethnic backgrounds, mobility levels and income brackets. The CRD's Regional Growth Strategy supports development of complete communities that include more opportunities to walk, cycle and use public transit conveniently. Ideally, recreation and green space can be easily accessed in a 10-minute walk or 15-minute bike ride. BC's Active Transportation Guide recommends specifications to be followed in the development of active transportation infrastructure while offering design choice to improve the user experience for all ages and abilities.

The concept of equity recognizes that people may require different resources or opportunities to meet a goal, as they have different needs and circumstances. Aspects of equity relate to procedural and distributive fairness. Procedural equity is the representation of multiple perspectives in decision-making. Distributive equity refers to spatial or locational access to a service and the related social factors affecting access to those services. Efforts to increase equitable, or fair, access to parks and protected areas are being promoted by the Convention on Biological Diversity (Aichi Target 11) at the global scale to provincial initiatives offering free park passes. Understanding barriers to accessing parks and trails in the CRD is limited, but a new partnership initiative to apply a gender equity lens to regional trails is being piloted in 2022.



Accessibility mats like this one located at Thetis Lake's main beach allow for access to the water for visitors with mobility aids.



Accessibility is about creating communities and offering services that enable everyone to participate fully without barriers. The 2018 *Accessible Canada Act* aims to achieve a barrier-free Canada by 2040 by identifying, addressing and preventing accessibility obstacles. The *Accessible British Columbia Act* and upcoming regulation will require public-sector organizations to develop accessibility plans and public-feedback mechanisms. A barrier is anything that hinders the full and equal participation in society of persons with a physical, mental, intellectual, cognitive, learning, communication or sensory impairment or functional limitation. New accessibility standards being developed and applied at the federal and provincial levels will inform regional efforts to improve accessibility.

### Priority 5-1

Enhance health and well-being by providing equitable access to regional parks and regional trails.

5-Actions	Timing
5-1a Develop and apply an Equity Lens to inform management and operation of regional parks and regional trails.	Ongoing
5-1b Conduct an Inclusion and Accessibility Assessment of regional parks and regional trails that assesses barriers and deterrents to access.	Short-term
5-1c Replace the 2003 Universal Access Plan for Regional Parks with new Accessibility Guidelines that provide objective information about the visitor experience, such as descriptions of trail terrain, length, and slope, to empower visitors to make appropriate individual choices and to better align user expectations with self-preparedness and ability.	Medium-term
5-1d Develop a Park Use Permit Policy that gives consideration to providing equitable access to programs, ensuring events and commercial activities align with CRD Regional Park values, and that fees reflect impacts on park facilities and users.	Medium-term
5-1e Work with First Nations to improve Indigenous cultural safety in regional parks.	Ongoing





East Sooke Regional Park  
Credit: Rosemary Neering

## 5. Monitoring & Reporting

Over the next ten years, the actions contained within this Strategic Plan will form the basis of service plans and work plans that are approved by the Board annually as part of the financial planning process. Collaboration with CRD divisions, First Nations Governments, municipalities, park agencies, and stakeholders will be integral to this process.

As progress is made in the implementation of this action plan, knowledge and understanding of impacts to regional parks and regional trails will continue to develop. To remain flexible and adaptable, and to support consistent implementation over time, CRD staff will:

- Prepare a funding strategy to accompany implementation;
- Continue to identify opportunities for external grant funding and partnerships;
- Share knowledge and best practices with others;
- Participate in professional development to improve service delivery;
- Continue to monitor data to track progress over time;
- Evaluate progress and adjust actions, as needed.



## 5.1 Performance Indicators and Reporting

Progress on the implementation of the 10-year Regional Parks and Trails Strategic Plan will be reported annually. Figure 11 summarizes the intended reporting indicators identified for each strategic priority area proposed for annual reporting. For each goal area, an action status will reflect general progress made towards all actions supporting that goal. This helps to summarize at-a-glance progress made on actions that may not be easily measurable or reflected in another indicator, such as actions that are ongoing or taking place over a long period. For other measures, an icon is provided to indicate the desired direction of the indicator over time (increasing or decreasing), if applicable.

Minor amendments to the Strategic Plan will be brought forward when necessary to update factual information and to update the park and trail classifications, as new additions to the system are identified and established.

Major amendments to the Strategic Plan will involve First Nations, stakeholder and public engagement and will be considered by the CRD Board for approval.



Thetis Lake Regional Park

FIGURE 11. ANNUAL INTENDED REPORTING INDICATOR

Goal area	Intended reporting indicator
 <b>Goal 1:</b> <b>Reconciliation</b>	 1-1 Reconciliation workplans are developed with each First Nation
	 1-1 Traditional use agreements are initiated with all First Nations in the region
	 1-2 Increased participation in Indigenous perspectives programs and presentations
	 1-2 Increased number of conservation and restoration projects in partnership with First Nations
	 1-2 Increased number of economic opportunities made available to First Nations
 <b>Goal 2:</b> <b>Conservation</b>	 2-1 Increased area of regional park land protected
	 2-1 Increased area of regional park land restored
	 2-1 Increased protection of at risk species and ecosystems in regional parks
	 2-2 Increased percentage of First Nations collaborating with CRD on cultural heritage protection projects
	 2-2 All staff receive cultural awareness training
	 2-3 Increased conservation and research partnerships

FIGURE 11. ANNUAL INTENDED REPORTING INDICATOR

Goal area	Intended reporting indicator
 <b>Goal 3:</b> Visitor Experience	 3-1 Maintain high rates of visitor satisfaction
	 3-1 Increased area available for compatible outdoor recreation
	 3-2 Review and update interpretive program content every 4 years
	 3-2 Increased number of volunteer hours
 <b>Goal 4:</b> Climate Action & Resiliency	 4-1 Increased use of regional trails
	 4-1 Completed regional trail priority projects
	 4-1 Minimized regional trail service disruptions
	 4-2 Increase Electric Vehicle charging stations at park accesses
	 4-3 Reduced operational greenhouse gas emissions
	 4-3 Maintain critical infrastructure in good condition
	 4-4 Increase the percentage of parks with management plans less than 15 years old
	 4-5 Increased area of regional park land
 <b>Goal 5:</b> Access & Equity	 5-1 Improved accessibility to regional parks and regional trails
	 5-1 Cultural awareness information is incorporated into new park kiosks





## Appendix A: Glossary

**Archaeological Site:** A heritage site or object protected by the *Heritage Conservation Act*.

**Accessibility:** The quality of being easily used, approached or understood by a wide range of people and, in some cases, adapted for specific uses.

**Biodiversity:** The variability among living organisms from terrestrial, marine and other ecosystems, and includes variability at the genetic, species and ecosystem levels.<sup>1</sup>

**Conservation:** The practice of preserving, protecting and/or restoring the natural and cultural environment and species within for future generations.

**Cultural Heritage:** Includes tangible and intangible heritage embedded into artifacts, sites or monuments that have a diversity of symbolic, historic, artistic, aesthetic, ethnological, anthropological, scientific or social values.<sup>2</sup>

**Ecosystem Goods and Services:** Provision of services by natural systems that benefit the region and thereby offset, complement or, in some cases, eliminate the need for engineered solutions, such as but not limited to soil quality and stability, water treatment and storage, recharge of aquifers, and air quality regulation.

**Facility:** A piece of equipment, infrastructure or amenity in a regional park or regional trail, such as but not limited to: trails, signs, benches or bridges.

**Fit-for-Life:** Describes the majority of individuals' level of participation in an activity, where their motivation for participation is driven primarily by the enjoyment of engaging in the physical activity; participation may include recreational-level competition and training but is not the primary motivation.<sup>3</sup>

**Invasive species:** Any species not native to a particular ecosystem whose introduction causes, or is likely to cause, economic or environmental harm or harm to human health.<sup>4</sup>

**Level of Service:** a measure of the quantity, quality and reliability of service performance in relation to service performance goals, including consideration of legal requirements, community expectations and technical standards.

**Micromobility Device:** Small, lightweight modes of transportation designed for individual use that may have an electric motor, such as but not limited to, bicycles, electric bicycles, scooters, electric scooters, self-balancing devices.

**Natural Assets:** A biophysical or biological attribute of a natural ecosystem.

**Outdoor Recreation:** Physical, social and intellectual activities that are immersed in a natural outdoor setting, are dependent on the natural landscape, are compatible with and relatively low-impact on the natural environment, and that directly or indirectly foster appreciation for the natural environment.

**Recreation Setting Characteristics:** The qualities and conditions of a specific area that influence users' experiences and motivations to recreate there.<sup>5</sup>

**Resilience:** The capacity of social, economic and environmental systems to cope with a hazardous event, trend or disturbance, responding to reorganizing in ways that maintain their essential function, identify, and structure while also maintaining the capacity for adaptation, learning and transformation.<sup>4</sup>

**Stewardship:** Responsible use and protection of the environment and cultural heritage through conservation and sustainable practices to improve ecosystem resilience and human wellbeing.

**Sustainable service delivery:** the process of providing services to the community with the lens of economic, social and environmental well-being, today and into the future.<sup>6</sup>

**Traditional Ecological Knowledge:** The knowledge, practice and belief concerning the relationships of living beings to one another and to the physical environment that has been developed by First Nations over centuries of living as part of the environment.

**User Experience:** The intrinsic reward individuals gain from participating in an activity.

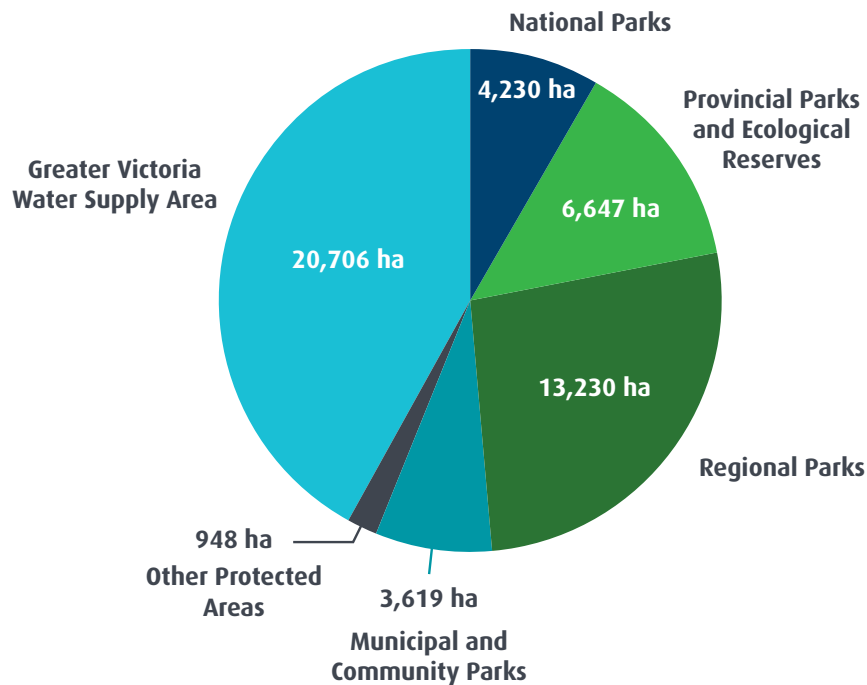
**User Objectives:** The user experience an individual seeks or the reason why an individual chooses a particular recreation activity or location.

#### References:

1. IPCC, 2014, Climate Change 2014: Impacts, Adaptation, and Vulnerability.
2. Adapted from: UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2009 UNESCO Framework for Cultural Statistics.
3. Adapted from: Sport For Life, Long-term Development in Sport and Activity Framework.
4. BC Ministry of Forests, 2008, Glossary of forestry terms in British Columbia.
5. Bureau of Land Management, Planning for Recreation and Visitor Services.
6. CRD, 2019, Corporate Asset Management Strategy.

# Appendix B: Parks and Protected Areas in the CRD

Parks and Protected Areas



PROTECTED AREA TYPE	HECTARES	% of CRD Land Base
National Parks	4,230	1.78%
Provincial Parks and Ecological Reserves	6,647	2.79%
Regional Parks	13,230	5.56%
Municipal and Community Parks	3,619	1.52%
Other Protected Areas*	948	0.40%
Greater Victoria Water Supply Area	20,706	8.7%

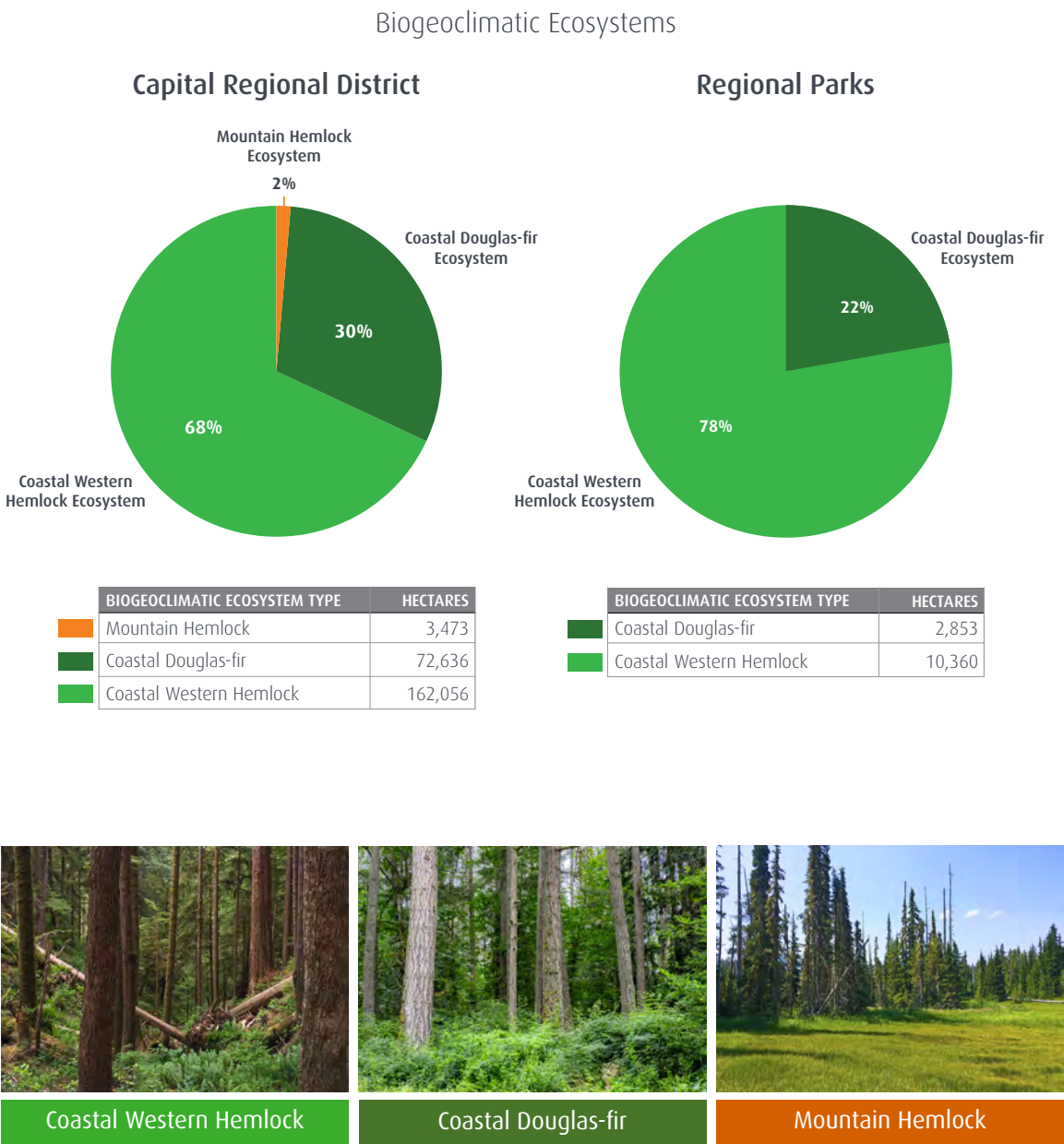
Total Parks and Protected Areas	49,380	20.75%
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Total CRD land base	238,000
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\*Note, this may not include a complete data set of privately protected lands that are protected in fee simple or conservation covenants



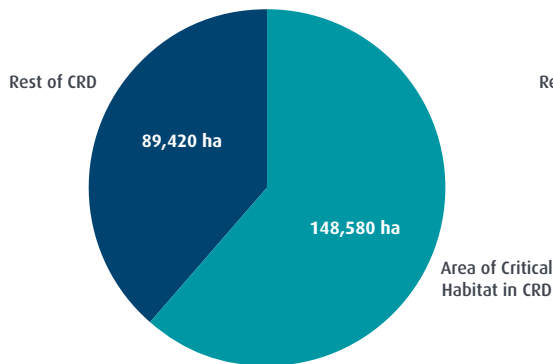
# Appendix C: Ecosystems and Species at Risk in the CRD



# Appendix C: Cont.

## Area of Critical Habitat designated for Species at Risk

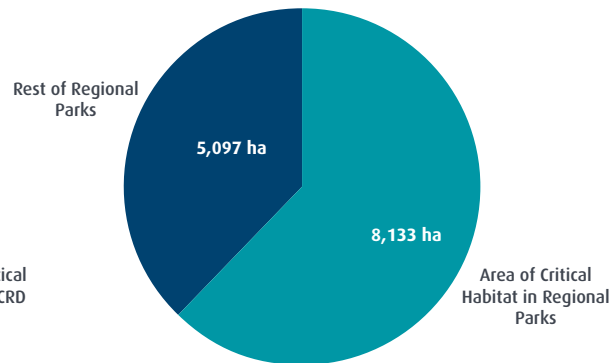
### Capital Regional District



CRITICAL HABITAT (AREA)	HECTARES
Area of Critical Habitat*	148,580
Rest of CRD	89,420

\* Identified for species at risk

### Regional Parks



CRITICAL HABITAT (AREA)	HECTARES
Area of Critical Habitat*	8,133
Rest of Regional Parks	5,097

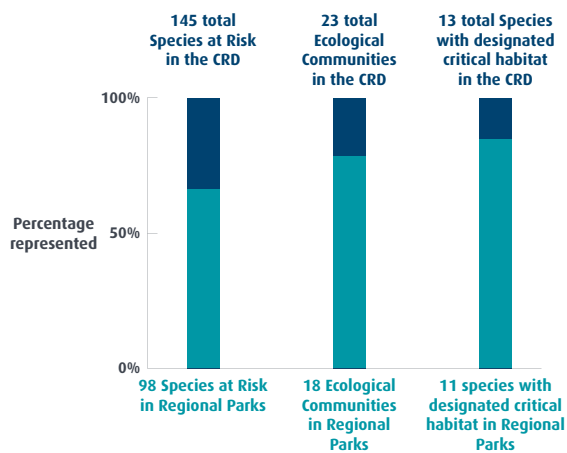
\* Identified for species at risk

## Regional Parks Representation of Species at Risk, Ecological Communities, and Critical Habitat in the CRD

SPECIES AT RISK	COUNT
In the CRD	145
In Regional Parks	98

ECOLOGICAL COMMUNITIES	HECTARES
In the CRD	23
In Regional Parks	18

CRITICAL HABITAT	COUNT
In the CRD	13
In Regional Parks	11



# Appendix D: Related CRD Strategies and Plans

CRD Plans intersecting with regional parks and trails	Regional Parks and Trails Strategy Goal				
	1	2	3	4	5
2019-2022 Board Priorities	•	•	•	•	•
Advocacy Strategy (2019)	•	•	•	•	•
Climate Action Strategy (2021)		•	•	•	•
Corporate Asset Management Strategy (2019)			•	•	•
Corporate Plan (2019-2022)	•	•	•	•	•
First Nations Task Force Final Report (2018)	•	•		•	•
Regional Food and Agriculture Strategy (2016)				•	
Regional Green/Blue Spaces Strategy (1997)		•		•	
Regional Growth Strategy (2018)		•	•	•	•
Regional Parks Land Acquisition Strategy (2020-2021)		•	•		
Regional Parks Strategic Plan (2012-2021)		•	•	•	
Regional Trails Management Plan (2015)			•	•	•
Regional Transportation Plan (2014)			•	•	•
Regional Water Supply Strategic Plan (2017)				•	
Statement of Reconciliation	•	•		•	•

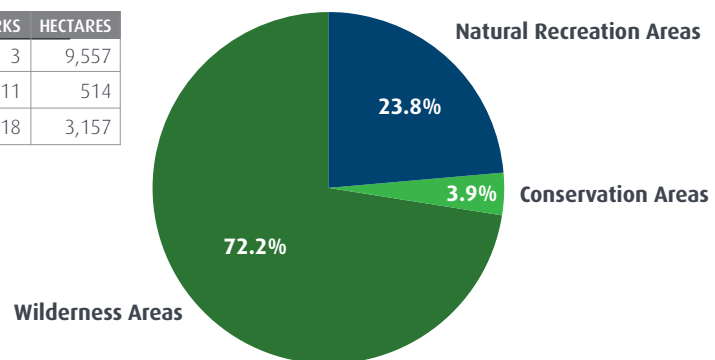


# Appendix E: Regional Park Classifications

	REGIONAL PARK	CONSERVATION AREA	WILDERNESS AREA	NATURAL RECREATION AREA	HECTARES
1	Albert Head Lagoon				7
2	Ayum Creek				6.4
3	Bear Hill				48.7
4	Brooks Point				6
5	Coles Bay				3.6
6	Devonian				13.5
7	East Point				0.8
8	East Sooke				1,458
9	Elk/Beaver Lake				443
10	Francis/King				107
11	Gonzales Hill				1.8
12	Horth Hill				36
13	Island View Beach				52
14	Jordan River				100
15	Kapoor				12.6
16	Lone Tree Hill				31
17	Matheson Lake				157
18	Matthews Point				24
19	Mill Farm Reserve				315
20	Mill Hill				71.6
21	Mount Parke				91
22	Mount Wells				121
23	Mount Work				754
24	Mountain Road				19.8
25	Roche Cove				160
26	Sea to Sea				3,979
27	Sooke Hills Wilderness				4,120
28	Sooke Potholes				72
29	Sooke River Reserve				7
30	St. John Point				27
31	Thetis Lake				923
32	Witty's Lagoon				56

Regional Parks Land Base by Classification

PARK CLASSIFICATION	NUMBER OF PARKS	HECTARES
Regional Wilderness Areas	3	9,557
Regional Conservation Areas	11	514
Regional Natural Recreation Areas	18	3,157









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