



REGIONAL DISTRICT OF NANAIMO

PARKS DIVISION Q2 AND Q3 2024 UPDATE

RECOMMENDATION

That the Parks Division Q2 and Q3 2024 Update report be received for information.

BACKGROUND

Regional Parks and Trails

Arrowsmith CPR Regional Trail

A trail assessment was completed to identify trail infrastructure that may need to be repaired, replaced or rerouted. Staff will meet with the land partner, Mosaic Forest Management, to discuss implementation of the recommendations.

New trail signage to improve wayfinding and visitor information will be installed in Q3. Staff are reviewing options with the Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure (MoTI) to improve signage along the Alberni Highway.

A new handrail and steps were installed on the McBey Creek pedestrian bridge.



Renderings of new trail signage



New handrail and steps on bridge

## **Benson Creek Falls Regional Park/Ammonite Falls Regional Trail**

The Benson Creek Falls Regional Park Creekside Place Advisory Committee met to discuss neighbourhood parking issues. The committee members conducted vehicle counts at both the Creekside Place and Weigles Road parking lots over the May long weekend and continued to monitor the lots over the summer. To continue the efforts to reduce parking pressures at Creekside Place, options are being reviewed to promote the Weigles Road trailhead as an access point to Ammonite Falls. Requests to identify the Weigles Road parking lot as a trailhead for Ammonite Falls have been submitted to public map platforms, including Google Maps, Apple Maps, Alltrails and Open Street Map.

## **Benson View Regional Trail**

Trail improvements are continuing in collaboration with Recreation Sites and Trails BC (RSTBC) to make the trail safer and more sustainable. Approximately 750 metres of trail has been rerouted and will be open to the public in Q4 2024. Staff are designing new signage to improve wayfinding along the trail, using the new collaborative RSTBC/RDN signage standard.

Nanaimo Search and Rescue received a grant from AdventureSmart to fund new reflective trail markers and educational signage about safe trip planning principles. Staff are designing the signage and it will be installed in Q4 2024.

Building permit applications are underway to install two trailhead kiosk signs where Benson View Regional Trail intersects with Outer Bypass and Gail's Trail.



*New trail reroute.*

## **Coats Marsh Regional Park**

Approval to proceed with weir decommissioning while retaining the beaver dam has been granted by the RDN Board, The Nature Trust of BC and Environment and Climate Change Canada. Staff are currently working with the consulting project team on a dam decommissioning application to the BC Ministry of Forests. This work will include design, permitting, and public engagement.

In Q1 2024 the consulting team began an additional study of the lower weir pool to provide an environmental assessment of removing the weir and recommendations on mitigating habitat loss. This work was requested by the Board at the February 27, 2024, Board Meeting. An environmental assessment report is expected in Q3 2024. The results will inform a more detailed restoration plan to be included in the final decommissioning plan.

Responding to public input and the additional environmental assessment work has delayed construction to Fall 2025. An updated project schedule is as follows:

- Preliminary design and risk assessment: September 2023 – December 2023
- Public outreach and engagement: December 2023 – January 2024
- Habitat Risk Assessment, design and permitting: April 2024 – October 2024
- Construction tendering: April – May 2025
- Construction: Late Summer/Fall 2025

## Descanso Bay Regional Park

In Q1 2024 the new campground office building was delivered and installed. The building will be used by the campground operator for an office and registration area.

Additional site upgrades completed in Q2 2024 include improving the gravel paths around the new office, installation of a privacy fence for the campground operator, and providing new cedar planters and picnic tables to further enhance the park entrance.



*New prefabricated campground office building at Descanso Bay Regional Park.*

## Englishman River Regional Park

Implementation of the Riparian Trail Assessment four-year work plan is underway. Staff collaborated with Mid Vancouver Island Habitat Enhancement Society volunteers to implement the immediate action of closing unsanctioned trails by removing a small footbridge, adding split rail fencing and placing small woody debris on the trail to deter further use.

Signage has been posted to designate the Channel Trail as a trail where dogs must be kept on-leash, to protect salmon eggs, spawning and rearing habitat.

The bridge over the side channel on the Clay Banks Trail was replaced.



*New bridge on Clay Banks Trail*



*New signage on Channel Trail*

## Lighthouse Country Regional Trail

Construction of the Nile Creek pedestrian bridge and trails to connect the north and south sections of the regional trail is underway and should be completed in Q4 2024. MoTI has issued a licence of occupation for the trail and bridge.

Sections of the south loop of the trail have been resurfaced and some of the small bridges are being replaced with culverts to improve maintenance access. The tap rail for visually impaired visitors has been replaced. Baffle barriers at the Lioness Boulevard railway crossing will be spaced further apart to improve accessibility for mobility scooters, wheelchairs, strollers and bicycles.



*New tap rail*



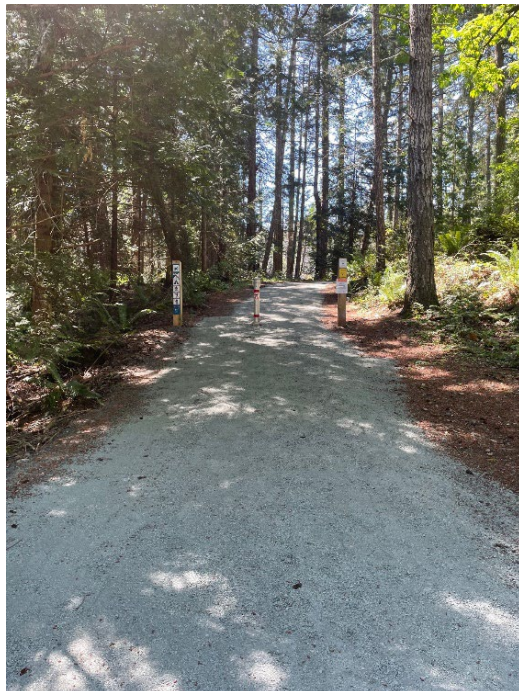
*Baffles to be spaced further apart*



*New surfacing on trail*

## Moorecroft Regional Park

Resurfacing of the main trail around the park was completed in Q2 2024. Park users can now enjoy an accessible loop from the parking area, as well as to Vesper Point and the connection to La Selva Place.



*Photo of the new accessible trail*



*Map of accessible trail within park*

### **Morden Colliery Regional Trail**

The initial phase to complete a bridge type analysis and high-level costing for both Nanaimo River and Thatcher Creek has been awarded to ISL Engineering and preliminary work began in Q3 2024.

### **Mount Benson Regional Park**

The park management plan update is continuing with the review of background information, environmental field reviews, a trail assessment, an archaeological overview assessment and development of a public engagement plan.

### **Top Bridge Regional Trail**

The trail reroute through the City of Parksville right-of-way is now complete. Trailhead infrastructure from Industrial Way has been moved to the new entrance, including entry signage and a garbage bin. The Island Corridor Foundation has approved the trail reroute from the Englishman River trestle to the City of Parksville right-of-way, and construction is scheduled to begin in October 2024.



*Photos of new trailhead and trail reroute through the City of Parksville right-of-way*

## **Community Parks and Trails**

### **Electoral Area A**

#### **Cassidy Parkland**

The removal of the mobile home and storage shed is underway. Once removed, work to prepare the park for development will begin, including the construction of a new fence and decommissioning the septic system. Development of a public engagement plan will follow to determine the best way for residents to provide their input and help develop a vision for the park.

#### **Cedar School Grounds Improvements**

Based on input from the March 6 2024, Electoral Area A Parks, Recreation and Culture Committee Meeting, and additional requests for pickleball and a pump track, the RDN hired an external consulting firm, Lanarc Consultants, to create a concept for the School District 68 licence area that includes the multi-age playground and a pump track. The plan also included the conversion of the Cedar Secondary School tennis court into pickleball courts.

Staff are reviewing pickleball court options and will pursue a Joint Use Agreement with School District 68 for improvement and community use of the tennis court at Cedar Secondary School for the Board's consideration. An application for non-farm use has been submitted to the Agricultural Land Commission for the playground and pump track on the lands adjacent to the skate park. Following approval, staff will proceed with public consultation on the draft concept plan for Cedar Secondary School Grounds Improvements.

## Pylades Community Park

The parking lot and trail have been resurfaced with fresh gravel.



## Electoral Area B

### Cox Community Park

Boardwalks were installed on Mallet Creek trail in a joint exercise with GaLTT and RDN park staff.



## Gabriola Recreation and Electoral Area B Parks and Trails Master Plan

Development of the Master Plan is currently underway, drawing from the insights gathered through the initial consultation phase and addressing issues and gaps identified in the research report. The draft master plan will be reviewed by the Advisory Committee and First Nations before being presented to the wider community for further input and refinement, which is anticipated in Q1 2025. [www.getinvolved.rdn.ca/ea-b-rpmp](http://www.getinvolved.rdn.ca/ea-b-rpmp)

### Huxley Community Park

Design drawings for a new storage building adjacent to the tennis court were completed in Q4 2023, and a building permit was received in Q1 2024. A Request for Quotes was issued to five contractors Q2 2024 and one quote was received in early Q3. The pricing received was substantially higher than anticipated and the RFQ was cancelled as a result. Staff are preparing a tender to pursue a more competitive bidding process. The tender will be issued in Q3 and will close in Q4 2024. Pending successful tender results, the new tennis storage building will be completed in Q1 2025.

## Orlebar Point

A 10-year Licence of Occupation for the management of the infrastructure and non-exclusive use of the lands at Orlebar Point was received and approved by the RDN Board in Q2 2024. The existing picnic tables have been removed and replacement tables and wheel stops for the parking area will be installed in Q3.

## Electoral Area C East Wellington/Pleasant Valley

### Anders and Dorrit's Community Park

New interpretive signage has been installed to provide information to park visitors about the history and unique tree species in the park.



*New interpretive signage*

A trail between the parking lot and River Walk bridges has been installed to improve access and manage drainage during periods of rainy weather.

## Electoral Area C – Extension

### Nanaimo River Canyon Community Park

Trail improvements from Nanaimo River Road through the park to the river are complete. Split rail fencing at key locations is anticipated to be installed in October 2024. The RDN has applied for a Licence of Occupation from Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure for parking improvements and the installation of park entry signage. This work will be completed once the licence has been approved.

### Extension School Lands Development

A Concept plan was developed in conjunction with Lanarc Consultants and Extension and District Recreation Commission to incorporate the long-term community vision for recreational use of the lands. The concept outlines a range of potential upgrades for both SD68 land and Extension Recreation Commission Land for future consideration. Priority improvements include an asphalt multi-sport court for ball hockey and basketball in the south portion of the School Board property adjacent to the existing playground.

A Licence of Use agreement with School District 68 (SD68) has been approved to utilize SD68 land for the development and maintenance of community amenities.

Park improvements will also include the development of a gravel parking area and will require a permit from the Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure to install the roadside parking portion.



Proposed Concept Plan

## Electoral Area E

### Jack Bagley Community Park

In the spring of 2024, RDN parks services staff reached out to recreation staff, School District 69 (Qualicum) and key user groups to determine whether the proposed field improvements were still valid. Through consultation with School District 69, Oceanside Minor Softball, Oceanside Youth Soccer, Oceanside Minor Baseball and the RDN recreation services staff, it was determined that there is a growing demand for practice space. In addition, a fully turfed field allows for a variety of different sports and ages to use the space reducing localized wear on the field, thereby no longer requiring a skinned infield.

The park will include flexible field space that allows for a turfed baseball/softball field and a variety of field sports for various ages. The field will be improved through fraise mowing, fertilizing, topdressing, overseeding and aerating and will require full field closure for up to 12 months to allow for successful remediation. Additional improvements will include a new backstop with covered dugouts, new ball control fencing, and improved access from the parking lot.



## Electoral Area F

### Errington Community Park Farmers Market Structural Repairs

Structural stability work is complete on the farmer's market stalls and picnic pavilion. Non-standard timber was used to reinforce and stabilize the structures to keep with the existing look and feel of the existing structures.



*Photos of new reinforcements of the Errington Community Park pavilion and market stalls*

### Errington Community Park Sport Court

The RDN is researching plans to construct a multi-sport court in the park. The proposed court will include a tennis court, pickleball courts and basketball nets, with an optional additional court for basketball. Geotechnical testing has been completed to inform feasibility and costs. Concepts will be developed and presented to the Parks and Open Space Committee in October 2024.

### Crown Land Adjacent Romain Road Community Park

An application for Crown Land Tenure for the two parcels adjacent to Romain Road Community Park was submitted and RDN staff have completed the management plan summary requirement for the application. The application is currently being reviewed by the Ministry.

## Electoral Area G

### French Creek Estuary Nature Preserve

The development of a management plan for the French Creek Estuary Nature Preserve is complete and will be presented to the Board in Q4 2024 for approval. Once completed, the management plan will present a long-term vision for the 23-acre Nature Preserve and identify a series of goals and actions to work towards. Public review of the draft Plan is complete and feedback has been incorporated into the management plan. [www.getinvolved.rdn.ca/fce-nature-preserve](http://www.getinvolved.rdn.ca/fce-nature-preserve)

### French Creek Community Park

A new split rail fence was installed in French Creek Community Park. The fence follows the existing trail and protects the adjacent forest and riverbank from foot traffic. The fence is funded in part through a Pacific Salmon Foundation grant that was received by the Friends of French Creek Conservation Society (FFCCS). In Q3 2024, staff contracted a graphic design firm to prepare interpretive signage for the park. This work is currently underway and the signs are expected to be completed and ready for installation in Q4 2024. Parks staff will continue to work with FFCCS on further path improvements and restoration planting in the park.

### **Rivers Edge Community Trails**

Construction of a new roadside gravel trail along Kaye Road and Peterson Road, and a culvert and trail crossing in Stormwater Community Park were completed in Q2 2024. A landscape service contract has been retained for the maintenance of the trail network.



*Photo of new culvert and trail crossing in Stormwater Community Park*

### **Crown Land Adjacent Huckleberry Lane in Dashwood**

Application for Crown Land tenure for one lot adjacent to Huckleberry Lane in Dashwood was submitted in August 2023 and is being reviewed by the province.

### **Lee Road Community Trail**

After a new sewer line was installed by a developer to service a new subdivision, the trail corridor was planted with native trees and shrubs and the trail was re-instated. The restoration area will receive establishment watering over the next two summers.

### **Maple Lane Community Park**

In Q4 2023, an engagement survey was developed and shared with the residents of the San Pareil neighbourhood to receive input on potential future improvements to the park. The results of the survey were compiled and shared with the community and the EA G POSAC in early 2024.

A draft concept plan was presented at the May 2024 POSAC meeting. Following a resolution from POSAC, staff are currently conducting another round of engagement in Q3 2024 to give the community an opportunity to provide feedback on the draft concept plan and the appropriate level of development for the park. Engagement results will be presented to the October EA G POSAC meeting for discussion.

## Electoral Area H

### Lions Community Park

Phase 3 improvements to the park will involve various upgrades to the ball diamonds. In Q1 2024 the existing concrete seating area was removed and new aluminum bleachers for both diamonds were installed in Q2 2024. Staff are working on future upgrades to the ball diamonds, which include turf improvements and installation of new infields. A contractor has been secured for the infield installation work, which will take place in the Fall.

Staff are working with community groups to improve park storage. Two modified shipping containers were delivered and installed in Q2 for additional storage space and a contractor has been arranged to complete repairs to the existing storage shed. Staff are also collaborating with Qualicum First Nation to create a totem pole and interpretive signage for the park.

### Wildwood Community Park

Design work and environmental permitting to extend the Wildwood Creek culvert is complete. A Request for Quote was issued in Q2 2024, staff awarded the construction contract, and construction was completed at the end of August 2024. The new culvert extension will allow for improved maintenance access to Wildwood Community Park and to the north loop of the Lighthouse Country Regional Trail.

### Deep Bay Community Trail

The boardwalk was replaced at this community trail to continue to protect the sensitive habitat along this trail.



## Parks Services System Wide Achievements

### Natural Areas Outreach

Invasive Species in Agriculture – Staff presented an “Invasive Species in Agriculture” workshop to members of the Nanaimo-Cedar Farmer’s Institute and residents of Cedar. Attendees learned about common invasives, legislation, management issues and emerging trends in invasive species management.

Youth Ambassador Program – In collaboration with the RDN’s Drinking Water and Watershed Protection staff, the Natural Areas Coordinator is organizing several outreach events for Cedar Secondary School and Kwalikum Senior Secondary School. Events will include invasive species removal and restoration planting to occur in September and October this year.

## **Parks Biodiversity Plan**

The Parks Biodiversity Plan field work phase is complete and McTavish Environmental Consultants are working towards completing the draft biodiversity plan. The draft plan is projected to be completed in Q4 2024 and will be presented to the Board for approval.

## **Invasive Species Management**

Invasive Species Removal – Staff and volunteers have collaborated on several invasive species removal projects, including:

- Removal of lamium, blackberry and reed canary grass in French Creek Community Park
- Cutting of daphne laurel at Buccaneer Beach Access
- Ongoing management of Scotch broom in collaboration with Broombusters
- Long-term invasive management and restoration planting in Queequeg Community Park, French Creek Estuary Nature Preserve, and Little Qualicum River Estuary Regional Conservation Area

## **Fire Risk**

RDN Parks Wildfire Risk Management Strategy – Staff have begun preliminary investigation into the structure and development of the RDN Parks Wildfire Risk Assessment Strategy. This strategy will provide direction on how to balance wildfire risk management with ecological and recreational values in parks, and a structure for evaluating and prioritizing operational management actions.

Community Resiliency Investment Program – FireSmart – Parks staff are collaborating with RDN Emergency Services to identify opportunities for FireSmart activities that may be funded by the UBCM CRI Program for 2025. Emergency Services will submit applications for 2025 in September (2024).

## **Programs and Events**

- *Science in the Park* events were held at Moorecroft Regional Park on April 7, and at Horne Lake Regional Park on June 9. The Moorecroft event had 79 children and families drop in, and the Horne Lake event had 59 children and families participate. The turnout, particularly at Horne Lake, is considered very good. The park operator at Horne Lake reported positive feedback from campers and from public who drove out to the park for the event. *Science in the Park* are drop-in, caregiver participation events, held in RDN parks by Nanaimo Science staff.
- Summer programs:
  - Summer hiring took place in March, with two temporary F/T staff (Summer Leader 1 and Summer Leader 2) hired to run a summer camp at Little Qualicum Hall/ Dashwood Community Park. This camp took place from July 2- August 31, Monday-Friday.
  - Nanaimo Science was contracted to run one three-day camp at Moorecroft Regional Park focusing on nature science.
  - Both camps filled to 100% capacity and have waitlists for the summer.
  - Learn to Fish programs took place in July and August at Horne Lake Regional Park. Both programs were full.

- The 18<sup>th</sup> Annual Golden Shoe Hunt took place March 29<sup>th</sup> through to May 10<sup>th</sup>. This event takes place throughout the region, with six shoes being hidden in six different parks over six weeks. Each week, an email was sent out to all signed up to the Get Involved page (~280 emails/week) and social media posts were made. The Get Involved page saw 2,200 total visits, with 54 new registrations for this hunt (in addition to the 200+ registrants from past years). A total of 98 entries were taken (through Get Involved or by tagging pictures with #goldenshoehunt2024) and three prize packs were awarded at the end of the hunt.

### **Parks Permits**

- 18 permit applications were received and processed (or currently being processed) during the second quarter. Although Park Use Permits processed in 2024 are down from 2023, the permits are becoming more complex, with larger and more complex events.
- Some events taking place via permit in our RDN parks include:
  - Bike programs at Lion’s Community Park
  - Educational events and tours at various parks including Anders and Dorrit’s Community Park, Lighthouse Country Regional Trail, and Englishman River Regional Park through various entities including VIU and Mid Vancouver Island Habitat Enhancement Society.
  - The BC Bike Race July 4 (600 participants, in a large-scale mountain bike race that spans across Vancouver Island with one stage taking place in the City of Nanaimo, RDN, provincial and private lands).

### **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

The projects outlined in this report have funds identified in the approved 2024-2028 Financial Plan.

### **STRATEGIC PLAN ALIGNMENT**

Planning and Managing for Growth - Understand and develop an inter-connected framework of strategies and plans to manage growth to support complete communities, including planning, transportation, infrastructure, and fiscal sustainability.

### **REVIEWED BY:**

- B. Legg, Superintendent Park Operations
- A. Gore, Superintendent Parks Planning and Development
- T. Osborne, General Manager, Recreation and Parks
- D. Holmes, Chief Administrative Officer