



ALBERNI-CLAYOQUOT REGIONAL DISTRICT

PARKS & TRAILS STRATEGIC PLAN

March 2015

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The ACRD is the quintessential west coast outdoor playground. With oceans, rivers and mountains running from peak to sea, there are amazing recreational opportunities for everyone.

The ACRD is home to a wide array of world renowned and regionally significant destinations and natural assets like the West Coast Trail, Pacific Rim National Park, Tofino and Ucluelet, Bamfield, Mt. Arrowsmith, and the Alberni Inlet. The region's abundant forests, lakes, beaches and mountains attract people from far and wide, year round.

In 2006 an *Alberni Valley Trails Planning Study* was completed and in 2008 the Alberni Clayoquot Regional District (ACRD) completed a *Regional Parks & Trails Policy Report*. The *Policy* report identified a need for an overall plan for regional parks and trails.

In 2014 the Parks & Trails Planning Committee was formed to provide input and collaborate with Valhalla Trails Ltd on the Parks & Trails Strategic Plan.

The Parks & Trails Strategic Plan is intended to provide a comprehensive and strategic parks plan for the ACRD that will guide park and trail development over the next ten years.

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PART 1: INTRODUCTION

The Parks & Trails Strategic Plan provides a foundation to meet the long term recreation and conservation needs of the regional district. It is a flexible document that can be easily adapted and updated to meet the future needs and changing values of individual communities and residents.

A consultative community-based approach was taken to identify current park needs and issues, as well as key park parcels for acquisition and development. The plan provides opportunities for expansion and the creation of new parks and trails for the future.

The following goals of the Parks & Trails Strategic Plan have been provided to assist with the development and implementation of a strategy for sustainable regional parks and trails within the ACRD, recognizing that parks and trails are essential to the physical, ecological, social and economic well-being of all ACRD residents and visitors. The goals are not listed in order of priority.

GOAL #1: GOVERNANCE

To create a plan that meets the needs of the entire ACRD and its varying communities, providing a fiscally responsible, yet employ flexible and alternative approaches to finance and budgeting for parks and trails.

GOAL #2: ACQUISITION

To acquire Crown and other lands for regional parks purposes as outlined in the Parks & Trails Strategic Plan over time and as the opportunity arises.

GOAL #3: ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

To provide opportunities for tourism and local economic development through enhanced parks and trails, including their amenities, connecting infrastructure and program opportunities within the ACRD.

GOAL #4 PLANNING AND MANAGEMENT

To ensure that parks and trail systems and facilities are designed and managed to minimize impacts on the environment and maintenance costs, while promoting healthy communities and alternative modes of transportation where possible. To protect and enhance parks, trails, related assets and infrastructure within the ACRD through routine maintenance and ongoing monitoring.

GOAL #5 VOLUNTEERS

To ensure local community and government involvement and leadership

GOAL #6 PARTNERSHIPS

To develop alternatives for managing recreation resources in partnership with key land owners, outdoors groups and First Nations.

GOAL #7 ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

To ensure the protection of ecosystems and natural resources within the ACRD's regional park system.

1.1 PARK BENEFITS

There are many benefits associated with parks and their use including the following:

- protecting plants, wildlife; and their unique native ecosystems
- rich and diverse parks and trail experiences
- environmental awareness and protection
- health and well-being
- economic development
- tourism opportunities
- social interaction
- cultural enrichment
- exercise and sports
- spiritual, intellectual and emotional connection with nature
- alternative transportation
- community linkages
- regional connectivity and travel routes
- sustainable park & trail infrastructure design, standards & construction techniques
- barrier free access

1.2 CURRENT TRENDS

As the west coast of Vancouver Island is a key destination for many travelers around the world, there is an opportunity for the ACRD to develop strategies that aim to enhance local economic benefits while at the same time improving local parks services for residents and visitors.

Parks opportunities play a significant role in helping people to choose where they want to live, recreate and vacation and they add considerably to a region's quality of life in helping to define the culture of place. Studies also show that parks and trails add to real estate value and the local economy.

Parks departments and their plans are organized in different ways depending on the needs and focus of the community. Traditional parks plans have elements such as ball fields, arenas, tennis courts, skate parks, pathways and swimming pools. Presently, there is a shift for land managers to locate traditional recreational infrastructure in urban areas where the populations are the greatest, and to have less costly, nature based infrastructure in outlying areas. Lower maintenance, sustainable infrastructure includes elements such as trailheads, composting toilets, benches and picnic tables, viewing platforms, boardwalks, trails and fishing docks.

1.3 TRENDS

Present trends show that rural parks departments and their staff are a key community resource, who are able to assist with local economic development and tourism initiatives through a wide range of possible outdoor recreation services. These opportunities can be supported in a region such as the ACRD and may include the following:

- **PARKS CLASSIFICATION SYSTEMS:** aim to provide a balanced, yet a broad range of parks types, accommodating a range of users and their unique needs
- **PASSIVE RECREATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES:** Formalizing experiences for hiking, cycling, bird watching, fishing, kayaking, canoeing, cross-country ski and snowshoeing through legal access, maps, signage, web-based information, safety plans etc.
- **GEO-TOURISM DESTINATIONS:** Geo-tourism incorporates the concept of sustainable tourism—that destinations should remain unspoiled for future generations—while allowing for ways to protect a place's character. Geo-tourism also takes a principle from its ecotourism cousin,—that tourism revenue should promote conservation—and extends it to culture and history as well, that is all distinctive assets of a place. Geo-tourism destinations are parks or natural area destinations that include interpretive elements based on local culture, history or the unique geography of a place.
- **PEDESTRIAN, CYCLING INFRASTRUCTURE OR EQUESTRIAN TRAIL ACCESS:** provide alternative modes of transportation such as trails, boardwalks, bridges,

alleyways, and separated road-side or off road pathways, cable cars, shuttle systems, alternative modes of transportation and linkages to key community destinations including regional parks and trails.

- **INTERACTIVE INTERPRETIVE ACTIVITIES:** such as geo-caching, structured orienteering activities, touch tanks, scaled models, night parks, colouring books, games or scavenger hunts maps in or out of doors provide activities that get people out to parks and appreciate them.
- **LONG DISTANCE TRAIL EXPERIENCES:** for hikers, cyclists and equestrians, the development of hut to hut systems, bed and breakfasts or interspersed camping opportunities such as the West Coast Trail and the Alberni Inlet trail allow for multi-day adventures.
- **MULTIPLE ACTIVITY FAMILY DESTINATIONS:** include the provision of multiple family friendly activities in a common area allowing families to enjoy different recreational experiences at the same time, without having to travel great distances. For example, having a dog park and bike park close to a stacked loop trail system, children's play areas nearby tennis courts, sports fields and skate parks.
- **OUTDOOR RECREATION PROGRAMMING:** such as daycamps, nature programs etc. can play a significant role in the development of community, parks and trail appreciation and stewardship.
- **NATURAL OUTDOOR PLAY AREAS:** Made of natural materials such as landscaped berms, tunnels of arching bushes, log balance beams, mini zip lines, tyrolean traverses and other structures that challenge balance and strength skills and that are designed for all ages.
- **BLUE ROUTES, KAYAK AND SMALL BOAT DOCKING FACILITIES:** formalized boating routes for canoes and kayaks with nearby parking facilities for kayaks, canoes and other small water craft and may include portages, fishing and camping infrastructure.
- **CAMPsites, PICNIC sites, OUTDOOR GROUP BARBEQUE FACILITIES:** these can be used as rental opportunities for the public or a revenue source for the regional district.
- **UNIQUE WATER CROSSINGS AND FEATURE PLAY AREAS:** such as trestles, cable cars, suspension bridges, ziplines, boardwalks, stepping stones in rivers or creeks.
- **VIEWING AREAS:** with scenic overlooks and covered picnic platforms.

- PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENTS: between government and non-profit trail user organizations allow for public trail access.
- INTERPRETIVE EDUCATION OPPORTUNITIES AND NATURAL HISTORY OR CULTURAL MUSEUMS: interpretive elements and signage designed to be of interest to all ages and backgrounds.
- ALTERNATIVE TRANSPORTATION: pedestrian and cycling infrastructure, boating infrastructure to allow people recreational experiences for tourists and local residents alike.
- PUBLIC ART: and recreation experiences combined can enhance the experience and celebrate local artists and culture.
- EDIBLE TRAIL EXPERIENCES: trails leading to key food and culture destinations that can be experienced by boat, bike or horseback safely and away from traffic and roads if possible. Popular edible trails may include farm trails, seafood circle or wine loops.

PART 2: PARK PLANNING

2.1 POLITICAL FRAMEWORK

The regional district includes 31,061 (2011 census) residents and covers 6,596.58 km² (2,546.95 sq mi). The Alberni Clayoquot Regional District is home to several layers of government including three municipalities, six electoral areas and ten First Nations.

ELECTORAL AREAS	MUNICIPALITIES	FIRST NATIONS
Area A- Bamfield	Tofino	Yuułu?iŋ?ath
Area B- Beaufort	Ucluelet	Uchucklesaht
Area C- Long Beach	Port Alberni	Tseshaht
Area D- Sproat Lake		Ahousaht
Area E- Beaver Creek		Hupacasath
Area F- Cherry Creek		Hesquiaht
		Tla-o-qui-aht
		Huu-ay-aht
		Ditidaht
		Toquaht

Table 1. ACRD Political Framework

Uchucklesaht Tribe, Toquaht Nation, Huu-ay-aht First Nations, Yuułu?iŋ?ath Government are treaty First Nations, three of which are participating members of the Regional District and one that will join in the next seven years. The remaining six First Nations are at various levels of the treaty process.

Each electoral area has policies within its official community plan directing local level actions for parks and trails. Some of the First Nations within the region have developed or are developing policies and planning guidelines for managing their parks and trail systems. As well, the province and Parks Canada work under unique park and forest land management prescriptions that meet their organizational goals. **Appendix F** *ACRD Parks and Trails Policy Matrix* provides an outline of all existing documentation related to the parks and trail planning process that has been prepared to date.

The ACRD established its regional parks function in 1970. The Regional District recognizes the need for interagency cooperation between electoral areas, first nations, as well as federal, provincial, regional and municipal governments. For the purposes of this plan, the ACRD will be divided into three sub-regions including the general rural areas surrounding Long Beach, Bamfield, and the Alberni Valley. The purpose of these sub-regions is to address the project goal Number One, which is *to provide a plan that meets the needs of the entire ACRD and its varying communities*.

The strategy provided in this plan includes recommendations for ACRD policies to manage and develop existing and future regional parks as well as suggestions for managing recreation resources in partnership with land owners, outdoor groups, and First Nations.

LAND OWNERSHIP AND USE DESIGNATIONS	
First Nation (Treaty Land & Indian Reserves	18,883 ha
Parks Canada	42,034 ha
BC Parks	290,780 ha
Forestry Tenures (Crown Land) (TFL, Woodlot, etc.)	340,908 ha
Community Forest	13,352 ha
ACRD Parks	735 ha

Table 2. ACRD Land Ownership

2.2 VISIONARY LAND USE PLANNING

A parks and trails plan is a strategic planning document that covers the entire regional district in scope. It should provide a broad overall vision and purpose for parks and trails within the ACRD. The plan and implementation strategy is generally prepared to be put in place over a defined period, while providing direction for achieving the community's vision for parks and trails.

Regional parks and trails should to be viewed from a larger land use management context. It is impossible for the ACRD to protect every environmentally significant site, wildlife habitat or corridor in the region within the regional park and trail system. Ultimately, ecologically-based land use planning and management techniques are the most effective methods for protecting the environment, however, regional parks and trails master planning can help.

2.3 LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT PLANNING POWERS

The ACRD was granted the function of regional parks in 1970 pursuant to section 766 of the *Municipal Act* through Letters Patent. The ACRD is empowered to undertake the acquisition, development, maintenance and operation of regional parks under the provision of the *Local Government Act*.

2.4 WHAT IS A REGIONAL PARKS & TRAILS STRATEGIC PLAN

The *Regional Parks & Trails Strategic Plan* is a higher level plan than *Regional Park Management plans*. It provides the purpose of the proposed system and an action plan for how to meet local resident needs through the provision of parks opportunities for recreation and leisure activities, as well as future land acquisitions. This strategic plan was derived from a community-feedback based classification system customized to balance recreational needs and the protection of resources. It provides recommendations and actions to protect various terrestrial and marine ecosystems and the critical habitat within the region. It provides an overview of existing parks and trails, as well as an inventory of key destinations and unique experiences for outdoor, cultural and recreational pursuits that are proposed for future parks acquisitions. Past planning work has been reviewed and referenced in **Appendix B**.

2.5 OFFICIAL COMMUNITY PLANS AND PARKS

Official Community Plans (OCP) and previous studies such as the *2008 Trails Policy Report*, the *2006 Alberni Valley Trails Planning Study* and other studies were prepared in to address some of the issues surrounding ACRD parks goals. Each electoral area OCP has indicated the following:

“The Regional District will build or assist in building, acquire, provide or otherwise encourage through development approvals not less than one kilometer of pathway of trail per year within the Plan area”.

Appendix F of this document provides a summary matrix of parks planning policies from all of the ACRDs Official Community Plans. This appendix was developed to help highlight some of the key values that have been identified for parks in the OCP planning process as well as other relevant documentation. Some of the general topics from the ACRD OCP planning processes that overlap into the *Regional Parks Strategic Plan* include:

- environmental protection
- recreational use
- climate change
- social development
- healthy lifestyles
- alternative transportation
- viable agriculture
- preservation of rural character
- heritage and culture
- land acquisition
- economic development

2.6 PARKS PLANNING TOOLS

The ACRD has a range of land use planning and regulatory tools that can be used to achieve responsible land use and environmental protection on public and private lands. The formal zoning designation of “parks” as a land use allows the regional district to protect environmentally sensitive areas or areas. Other planning tools that can be employed include those outlined in *Table 3*. The toolbox below provides an overview of the tools for protecting and growing a parks system.

LAND PROTECTION TOOLBOX			
TOOL	USE	DEFINE	EXAMPLE
PROTECTION	STEWARDSHIP	Stewardship is an ethic that embodies the responsible planning and management of resources. Through various stewardship activities ACRD parks can be protected and enhanced. May include volunteer coordination, interpretive opportunities or public education activities	bear-awareness programs, forest fire interpretive opportunities, signage or volunteer tree planting days
	CONSERVATION COVENANT	under section 219 of the Land Titles Act a covenant may be registered against the title to land, in favor of a municipality or a conservation body (usually a non-profit organization), to protect land or a feature of the land such as important trees. The purpose is to ensure that the land or specified amenity remains in its natural state	tree conservation covenant or wetland protection covenant
	REGIONAL GROWTH STRATEGY (RGS)	a RGS provides a broad regional vision, goals and policies for managing region-wide growth and development	regional approach for acquisition to plan and construct long distance trails including funding plan preparations
	OFFICIAL COMMUNITY PLANS (OCPs)	an OCP provides long term plans for specific areas, including goals and policies for environmental protection and community parks. Each of the municipalities and electoral areas within the ACRD has an OCP	linking trails to key neighbourhood destinations, providing and funding parks programs within each electoral area
	DEVELOPMENT PERMIT AREAS (DPAS)	OCPs can designate DPAs for the purpose of protecting environmentally significant sites or unique areas. For instance, the majority of OCPs establish DPAs along watercourses to protect their riparian areas	DPAs can also prescribe best management practices such as using Low Impact Developments (LIDs), storm water runoff
	ZONING BYLAWS	zoning bylaws can be used to establish setbacks from environmentally sensitive features	Setbacks from watercourses, hazardous areas and nest trees
	DEVELOPMENT APPROVAL PROCESS	A regional district can acquire parkland as well as place restrictive covenants on land parcels to protect environmentally or culturally sensitive features through re-zoning, subdivision & development permit approval process	Restrictive covenant and setbacks from a ravine edge
EDUCATION	SIGNAGE	A unified signage program provides an opportunity for the community to brand the parks system. There are generally three types: wayfinding, interpretive and regulatory	<i>Wayfinding:</i> welcome kiosks, orientation maps, directional arrows. <i>Interpretive:</i> panels/displays depicting local habitat, geology or culture. <i>Regulatory:</i> No Dogs, No fires, No camping
	PROGRAMING	A variety of parks programs can be arranged by the regional district to help promote parks and trails. These are great opportunities to get support from the community as well as teaching them to become stewards of the parks system	Scheduled nature hikes, trail maintenance days, bird watching sessions, art in the park etc

Table 3. Land Protection Toolbox

PART 3: KEY OPPORTUNITIES

This plan provides a diversity and where possible a representative sample of local and regional parks and recreation opportunities in the regional district by planning and developing one or more regional or community parks or trails within in each of the sub-regions of the Regional District. The key opportunities identified through the public and community input process can be viewed as gaps within the existing system. These include the following:

1. community linkages and trail experiences
2. access to separate motorized and non-motorized recreational use opportunities
3. access to waterfront and marine based recreation opportunities
4. providing a variety of active and passive recreation options
5. protection of environmental resources, sensitive areas, wildlife corridors, watershed and endangered/listed species
6. accessible, rollable trail experiences for those with physical challenges
7. development of art and culture experiences and preservation of resources through interpretation

Map 1 provides an orthophoto with established parks & trails as well as government boundaries. Future regional park acquisitions will be based upon the key opportunities provided as well as a “wish-list” of regional parks that were gathered through public consultation efforts. **Map 2** provides a map with proposed and established parks & trails in the ACRD.

PART 4: VISION

4.1 FOUR-P COMMUNITY VALUES

As a result of the public engagement process, the following community service interests were identified:

1) PROTECTION

- represent and protect an array of regionally significant natural and cultural areas
- educate residents and visitors about local natural resource protection and enhancement for future generations

2) PEOPLE

- stimulate economic development through outdoor recreation based tourism opportunities
- encourage sustainable alternatives for transportation linking communities, parks and key destinations in the ACRD

3) PARKS

- invest in sustainable parks and trail infrastructure through the use of green building and other best management techniques
- utilize construction standards and best management practices to reduce environmental impacts, greenhouse gases and climate impacts
- develop a long distance, multi-use “regional” trail system that connects Bamfield, the Alberni Valley, Tofino and Ucluelet

4) PROGRAMS

- provide diverse, regionally significant outdoor recreation activities that are accessible and friendly to all ages and abilities
- provide opportunities for local residents and visitors to have a high quality of life, healthy lifestyle choices and opportunities for outdoor recreation

MISSION

ACRD will work with all citizens to be good stewards of our environment, and to provide safe and welcoming opportunities to play, learn, contemplate, and build community.

VISION

Developing community and culture through Protection, People, Parks, and Programs.

PART 5: COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

5.1 REGIONAL PARKS & TRAILS PLANNING COMMITTEE

To ensure transparency and a community-based approach for the project, the ACRD established a volunteer Parks and Trail Plan Committee. The committee was formed in the summer of 2013, with an initial volunteer membership of approximately twelve people. This number grew over the subsequent six months up to 24 volunteers from a range of electoral areas. This valuable group of local residents represented a wide spectrum of interests from all reaches of the district, helping to share their knowledge of the rural areas and spread the word about the project.

The steering committee issues and concerns identified throughout the process have been recorded and form part of the background for this plan.

5.2 COMMUNITY INPUT

A comprehensive community input strategy was developed for all areas of the ACRD that included open houses in Bamfield, Tofino, Ucluelet and Port Alberni in the fall of 2013.

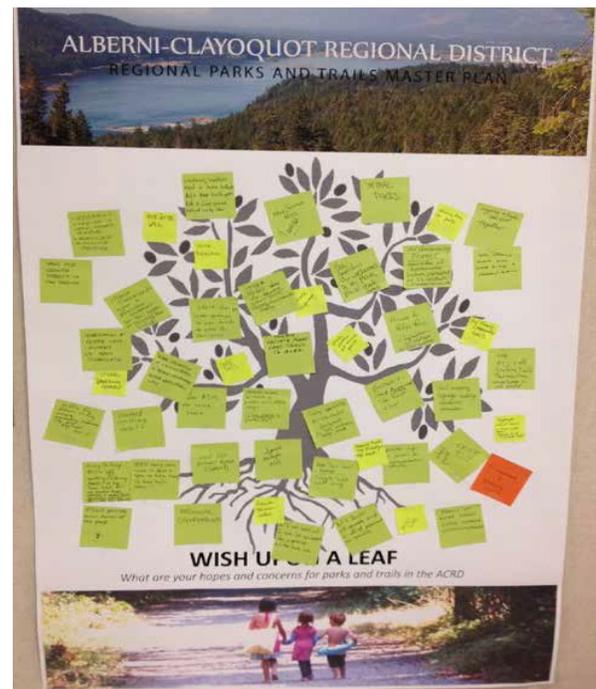
A Forestry Day event was held in Port Alberni, followed by the initial four open houses in each of the main population centers of the regional district. These included Bamfield, Port Alberni, Tofino and Ucluelet. All of the open houses were advertised in local newspapers and on the ACRD website. Where possible, social media was used to inform residents about the project and to encourage them to come and provide their input.

More than 120 people participated in the open houses. Participants were asked to provide their ideas on a number of topics related to parks and trails.

Three main exercises were offered including a large map to illustrate the scale of the district and to help people to identify places that they felt should be protected or designated as regionally significant to parks or trails.

Secondly, participants were asked to interact and write on large posters that asked a range of questions related to the project. They were also asked to “wish upon a leaf” to contribute their most important ideas to the committee.

Appendix E Public Engagement Report, provides an example of a communication tool to inform public about the Parks & Trails Strategic Plan.



5.3 KEY OUTCOMES OF PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

Among others, there were two key outcomes of the public engagement process. These included:

- 1) An ACRD Regional Wide Parks & Trails Inventory (see **Appendix A**)
- 2) a general level of support for a park land acquisition tax from all three sub-regions. Most open house participants were willing to pay a minimum of \$20.00 or more in property taxes for new parks per household. In 2014 an average house valued at \$200,000 was taxed \$0.20.

PART 6: ACTION PLAN

6.1 REGIONAL PARKS & TRAILS STRATEGIC PLAN GOALS

To ensure that the Regional Parks Service effectively serves and benefits all residents of the ACRD, the following target areas and goals have been established. These goals will help to guide the plan’s vision and implementation program over the next ten years. Directive policies and actions have also been created to support each goal with descriptive tasks and an implementation timeframe.

For the purposes of this section, short term = 1-3 years, medium term = 3-5 years, long term = 5-10 years. Later sections in this document provide options for implementation based on costs, liability, effectiveness and long term capacity building with regard to implementation of these goals.

6.2 GOALS (In no order of priority)

1. Governance
2. Acquisition
3. Economic Development
4. Parks Planning and Management
5. Volunteers
6. Partnerships
7. Environmental Protection

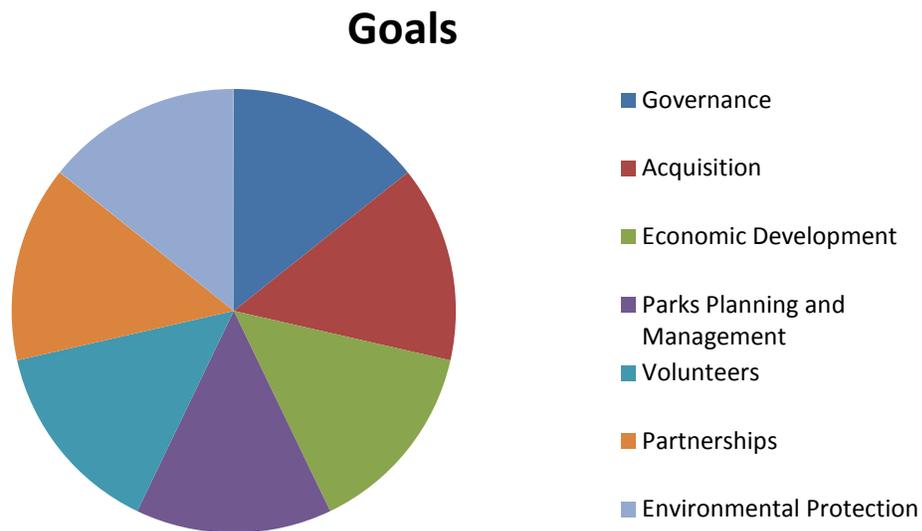


Figure 1. ACRD Parks & Trails Strategic Plan Goals

6.2.1 GOAL 1: GOVERNANCE

To create a plan that meets the needs of the entire ACRD and its varying communities, providing a fiscally responsible, yet employ flexible and alternative approaches to finance and budgeting for parks and trails.

POLICIES:

- 1) that the ACRD Board of Directors adopt the Parks & Trails Strategic Plan.
- 2) that the ACRD Board of Directors reassess the Parks & Trails Strategic Plan periodically, evaluating its effectiveness in relation to current and future regional parks and trails needs.
- 3) that a geographically balanced approach to the parks system be adopted to serve all ACRD residents fairly as provided in this plan's regionally focused classification system.
- 4) That parks development plans do not exceed the fiscal ability of the regional district to maintain all facilities and sites to an acceptable standard.
- 5) that strategic funding options provided in the Parks & Trails Strategic Plan be considered for the acquisition of proposed regional park sites and the ongoing management of amenities and regional parks
- 6) that the regional board consider the establishment of a regional parkland acquisition fund
- 7) that the regional board utilize the parkland acquisition criteria provided in this plan to evaluate property before accepting or purchasing it for park purposes
- 8) that a range of funding sources and partnering opportunities be evaluated by staff each year to ensure that no opportunities are overlooked by the regional district to act on potential acquisitions or to secure available funds
- 9) that each year staff be requested to include parks acquisition and maintenance programs in the annual budget
- 10) that the district examine alternative funding options including development cost charges, provincial or other grants for regional parks, borrowing in accordance with the provision of the Local Government Act, donations, user fees, federal/provincial employment programs, provincial lottery funds, grants and community incentive programs
- 11) that the regional district consider lease or rent of property on a seasonal or longer-term basis for the purpose of operating a concession or other commercial enterprise
- 12) that the regional district allow for the temporary placement and operation of a concession or commercial enterprise for special events that occur in a regional park
- 13) that resources acquired from parkland such as hay and firewood be considered for sale with the acquired funds used for regional parks development.
- 14) that the regional district consider selling annual use permits to groups who may pose negative impacts to trails or parks within the ACRD to offset maintenance costs and provide enhanced user experiences for those groups.
- 15) that the ACRD consider taxes for regional parks purposes as supported by residents during the public engagement process

- 16) that the regional board adopt a policy to allocate taxes for regional parks purposes on a regional basis

ACTIONS:

TASK	NOTES	TIMEFRAME
1) Seek ACRD Board approval of the Parks & Trails Strategic Plan		Short term
2) Formalize a regional parks plan that services the sub regions of the regional district		Short term
3) Update the Parks & Trails Strategic Plan	Annual reports should include a general review of projects accomplished and the plan should be updated every 3-5 years	Medium term
4) Establish a regional parks acquisition fund		Short term
5) Establish a regional parks tax levy		Short term
6) Identify sources of funding and coordinate projects to meet criteria in order to attain funds		Short term
7) Establish a sub-regional budget for regional parks that includes acquisition, maintenance and capital programs		Short term
8) Develop an annual report for the regional Board and Parks Commission outlining annual progress in ACRD regional parks and trails		Short term
9) Develop short, medium and long term funding strategy and budget for attaining & maintaining existing and proposed Regional Parks.		Short, medium, and long term

6.2.2 GOAL 2: ACQUISITION

To acquire Crown and other lands for regional parks purposes as outlined in the Regional Parks Master Plan over time and as the opportunity arises.

POLICIES:

- 1) that the regional district provide a range of park types promoting access to recreational amenities, land protection, partnerships and economic development fairly between each sub-region.
- 2) that the regional district consider acquiring lands for parks purposes that reflect the various parks classifications and acquisition criteria prescribed in the Parks & Trails Strategic Plan.
- 3) that each site be evaluated against the acquisition criteria provided in the Parks & Trails Strategic Plan.
- 4) that proposed regional parks identified in the plan be considered for acquisition over time as opportunities arise and as limited resources allow.
- 5) that the regional district consider alternative methods for acquiring regional parks including purchase, lease, municipal/school district/ provincial park transfer, private donations, dedication of land through the subdivision and approval systems including cash in lieu, easements, rights-of-way, permitted use/access agreements and license of occupation.
- 6) that the regional park acquisition and development process, include a preliminary ownership assessment of each proposed regional park or trail. The assessment should evaluate the following:
 - site analysis including; ecology, hydrology, land ownership, hazardous conditions, partnership opportunities, and existing level of protection in the nearby geographical area
 - social and cultural significance
 - emergency planning
 - land acquisition costs
 - potential park design concepts
 - construction development costs
 - operation, maintenance and monitoring costs

- 7) that staff monitor acquisition opportunities for future parks in each sub-region and implement the parks planning and acquisition tools when necessary to secure future parcels and or agreements.
- 8) A Parks & Trails Strategic Plan has limitations both jurisdictionally and financially. Consequently, there are areas and trails which may be beyond the scope of this plan, but which are still of high recreational and environmental importance to the community. ACRD recognises this and is supportive of efforts of other levels of government, First Nations, NGO's and community groups to protect and/or acquire such properties. These include, but are not necessarily limited to the properties and trails identified in **Appendix A''**.

ACTIONS:

TASK	NOTES	TIMEFRAME
1) Continually monitor opportunities for land acquisition	Staff and board members should develop transparent relations with realtors, private land owners and partners who may have common interests in park preservation and community needs for parks	Ongoing
2) Conduct a preliminary ownership assessment of each proposed park/ trail	This assessment should include the items outlined in policy #6	Short term
3) Review each sites potential as outlined by the classification system and research the conceptual options possible for acquiring the lands identified	See page 43 for the classification system	Short term
4) Explore options for funding including grants to purchase park lands		Short term
5) Ensure public involvement and board approval	The Regional Board will be required to approve the long term maintenance as well as the land transfer	Short term
6) Acquire approved park sites as outlined in the Parks & Trails Strategic Plan	Once formally acquired, staff should begin a management planning process for each new regional park	Short term

6.2.3 GOAL 3: ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

To develop opportunities for tourism and local economic development through enhanced parks and trails, including their amenities, connecting infrastructure and program opportunities within the ACRD.

POLICIES:

- 1) that the ACRD work with the private sector to build partnerships, economic development and enhanced tourism destinations and opportunities (business sector, First Nations, non-profits, etc) through parks, trails and outdoor recreation amenities and services.
- 2) that a Regional Parks Tourism, Communications and Marketing Strategy be developed with the regional board, local chamber of commerce, tourism agencies, First Nations, potential partners and the public's input. The strategy should be developed to raise awareness about ACRD parks and trails, its vision, goals and objectives for the purposes of local investment, tourism and overall local confidence in the Parks Service.
- 3) That the regional district considers branding to create a consistent and professional image for ACRD Regional Parks across the region. The Parks Tourism, Communications and Marketing Strategy should develop a website, tourism guides, brochures, signage, maps, public facilities, digital and social media and other tools to assist with describing, marketing and branding ACRD regional parks through the use of uniform, simple, user-friendly designs, colours, materials etc.
- 4) that parks management plans be created with consideration given to economic development and partnership opportunities and revenue generating projects and programs.
- 5) that the ACRD board consider First Nation culture names in the design of signage and infrastructure to demonstrate cultural diversity and promote geo- tourism opportunities where appropriate. For example, the sea to sky highway signage installed for the Olympic Games between Vancouver and Whistler.

ACTIONS:

TASK	NOTES	TIMEFRAME
1) Work with economic development organizations, the ACRD Board and consultants to determine a Parks Tourism, Communications and Marketing Strategy that is inclusive and sets an overall vision for involvement of regional parks in the greater ACRD economic development realm	Include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vision • Target audiences • Signage-wayfinding, regulatory, and interpretive • Material selections for parks amenities • Website, printed materials etc. 	Ongoing
2) Seek Board approval for the Parks Tourism, Communications and Marketing Strategy before moving ahead with any new lower level signage, communications and branding strategy	It is important that the new regional parks function be branded in a recognizable way across the ACRD. To promote continuity and develop a community support for the new program	Short term
3) Develop management plans that include revenue generating mechanisms	To promote diversity in programming, learning opportunities and interesting experiences for locals and visitors	Short, medium, and long term

6.2.4 GOAL 4: PLANNING AND MANAGEMENT

To ensure that parks and trail systems and facilities are designed and managed to minimize impacts on the environment and maintenance costs, while promoting healthy communities and alternative modes of transportation where possible.

POLICIES:

- 1) that the ACRD adopt the Regional Parks & Trails Strategic Plan and utilize the parks classifications contained herein.
- 2) that standards for parks and trails be developed and incorporated into management plans with sustainable layout and design techniques in order to save regional parks funds over the long term, protect the environment, improve user accessibility and safety as well as the overall condition and experience of all parks trails within the ACRD.
- 3) that partnership opportunities with local businesses, First Nations, non-profit groups, Search and Rescue organizations, other government organizations and user groups be identified within the management planning process to public involvement and community partnerships.
- 4) that estimates be prepared for all parks and trail improvements in the case that grant applications can be made for development for each park classification.
- 5) that parks facilities provided are designed with sustainable best management practices and green building technologies (solar, composting, rainwater reuse, LIDs, xeriscaping, green roofs etc.) to minimize long term infrastructure maintenance costs for the region.
- 6) that a safety plan be developed for the ACRD parks system that includes codes of conduct, a public awareness strategy for parks, emergency evacuation planning and procedures, emergency access planning for remote sites, communications with local emergency coordinators, environmental response programs and risk management procedures for all major parks systems.
- 7) that the ACRD develop a regional parks system that complements existing and future ACRD local government plans such as Official Community Plans and those of First Nations, other government agencies, landowners and interested groups within the region.
- 8) Annually, staff, contractor or the management authority for a regional park shall submit to the regional board for review and approval updated regional park management plans showing the revised maps and photographs of proposed new facilities, parking areas, trails, site accesses and other servicing details prior to any site disturbance or development.
- 9) that formal, linear park connections be developed to connect to the various park types as classification system identified in the Parks & Trails Strategic Plan.
- 10) that pedestrian, wheelchair, cycling, boater and equestrian trails and park linkages be developed through the region to encourage alternative modes of travel and to improve the quality of life and health of local residents and visitors to the ACRD.
 - a. that lands be acquired when possible and parks and trails be designed to encourage alternative modes of transportation,

- b. that shorter and more efficient route options be sought through the development planning process to where possible to improve pedestrian, cycling, boating and equestrian alternative transportation options
- 11) that public accesses and pedestrian loop opportunities between beaches and key community destinations be considered a high priority for trail system design.
- 12) that a stacked loop system with varying lengths of experiences (1 k, 2.5 k, 5 k, 10 k) be considered within micro/ local area trail systems.
- 13) that regional park management plans be required to comply with the legislation, regulations and standards provided by the provincial government and regional district bylaws.
- 14) that management plans for each of the ACRD parks be prepared and include the following elements:
- inventory all assets including structures and signage
 - public engagement on park function, need and sustainable design options
 - analysis of strengths and challenges associated with each site
 - provision of innovative and green design solutions
 - provision of the following guiding principles on accessibility and universal design:
 - 1) Provide opportunities for accessible outdoor experiences that promote a sense of dignity and independence for visitors.
 - 2) Promote universal design in representative natural landscapes throughout the regional parks and trails system.
 - 3) Acknowledge accessibility and universal design as a primary consideration in any new development or retrofitting project in regional parks and trails.
 - public safety and risk management planning
 - tourism and economic development opportunities and partnerships
 - mapped site assessment
 - natural elements
 - ecosystem description and environmental assessments
 - conceptual phased plans for development
 - estimated time frames and phasing potential
 - overall costs for materials, labour, mobilization, planning and design
 - potential new park lands
 - maintenance and monitoring schedule and costs
 - identification of partnership opportunities for the plan including those that may benefit from grants/funding.
- 15) that undeveloped park lands be indicated as passive parks (use at your own risk).
- 16) that ACRD communicate with forest companies regarding logging road access.

- 17) that standards be developed and sustainable designs be required for all ACRD parks and trails in order to minimize erosion and environmental impacts, reduce maintenance costs, improve accessibility, and ACRD liability over the long term.
- 18) that park management authorities outline a maintenance plan indicating the required works to be undertaken, who will undertake the work and the frequency and cost of works. Photo documentation depicting before and after works as well as GPS data collection of inventories will help.
- 19) to ensure the yearly status, costs and locations of infrastructure within the greater parks system.
- 20) that park developments follow the uses permitted in the parks classification system to ensure that a broad cross section of each classification is achieved in each sub-region of the ACRD. For example that water/beach accesses provide residents and visitors sufficient and quality access to beaches, lakes and rivers.
- 21) that ACRD trails are sustainably designed with the intention of achieving grades of less than 15 percent and averages of 10-12 percent maximum as outlined in Ministry of Forests, Lands and Natural Resources Recreation Manual, Chapter 10.
- 22) that parks include a maintenance and monitoring program within their parks management plans, paying special attention to carrying capacity and costs of maintenance over the long term.
- 23) create standardized signage for the entire ACRD.

ACTIONS:

TASK	NOTES	TIMEFRAME
1. Incorporate standards for parks and trails into management plans with sustainable layout and design techniques	to save funds over the long term and improve user safety and the overall condition and experience of all parks trails within the ACRD, use standards such as the Ministry of Forests, Lands and Natural Resources standards found in the Recreation Manual, Chapter 10 for new trails in the ACRD and for enhancement of existing trails in the system	Short term
2. Develop Regional Parks Management Plans for <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mt Arrowsmith • China Creek Park • Alberni Inlet Trail 	Management plans should include research and development of field based information before decision making takes place. Include BC Parks Geocaching Policy.	Short term
3. Develop parks management plans for proposed regional parks, assuming the ACRD has full ownership or management responsibility to the sites identified.	Management plans should include research and development of field based information before decision making takes place.	Medium term
4. Prepare cost estimates	Estimates for costs of all management plan improvements should be created in the case that grant applications can be made for developments to each park classification	Short term
5. Seek approval from the Board to proceed with project development	Research funding opportunities for management plan implementation and development. Matching funds may be required on behalf of the ACRD.	Short term
6. Formally capture all parks infrastructure and legally permitted trails in the ACRD	use GPS, photographs and create a database document using ArcView GIS mapping system for all park types. Use annotation describing ownership or legal arrangements	ongoing
7. that a study of Ministry of Transportation road right-of-ways to waterfront or beaches be conducted to secure water access	An inventory of all MOT rights of way leading to water will help to determine access. Inventory data may include; photographs, steepness of slope, social values, beach type, uses and activities	medium term
8. that existing trails of significance adopt a phasing plan	to upgrade sections steeper than 15 % or that require drainage & or other site improvements on sections that are not sustainable	short, medium term
9. that a trail assessment be conducted for the regional district	compile a mapped inventory all of the legal & formalized layers of trail between the various levels of government	short term

6.2.5 GOAL 5: VOLUNTEERS

To ensure local community and government involvement and leadership.

POLICIES:

- 1) that the regional district establish a regional parks and trails committee. This committee should be empowered with a regional mandate to meet the goals set out in this plan and to be a sounding board for ACRD staff and future parks staff member, as well as the regional board on uses related to regional parks.
- 2) that the regional district develop and implement a volunteer strategy for the regional parks program. This strategy might include trail building & maintenance, volunteer wardens, interpretive opportunities, park and trail recreation programs and events.
- 3) that the ACRD consider augmenting staff resources with board approved, structured and supervised volunteer programs and partnerships.

ACTIONS:

TASK	NOTES	TIMEFRAME
1) Develop a regional parks volunteer strategy	This document provides rewarding tasks for all ages and abilities & including term limits for formal positions, provides diverse opportunities to attract a wide range of participants. Strategy should outline the frame of reference for the committee, other volunteer programs, stakeholders, partnership opportunities, programs & events. Work to expand the diversity of user group volunteers (bike, motorized, etc).	Ongoing
2) Seek Board approval for the Parks Tourism, Communications and Marketing Strategy before moving ahead with new lower level signage, communications and branding strategy	Increased volunteer management and coordination is recommended to oversee parks planning, volunteer work and project management.	Short term
3) Develop management plans that include revenue generating mechanisms	6 year term maximum. Members may reapply after 1 year. Term limits encourage inclusiveness & diversify & long term implementation of the program. Committee should be representative of the ACRD region & hold spots vacant until a person from the appropriate area is found. 6 or 9 positions total. A staff member should oversee the parks committee to ensure effective communication, leadership & support.	Short term

6.2.6 GOAL 6: PARTNERSHIPS

To develop alternatives for managing recreation resources in partnership with key land owners, outdoors groups, First Nations, and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO).

POLICIES:

- 1) that partnerships should be developed with private lands owners, municipalities, First Nations, BC Parks, Parks Canada, post secondary institutions, and other agencies with a stake in the land management of sensitive ecosystems within the ACRD as well as where economic development or grant funding opportunities through tourism may be viable.
- 2) Partnerships should be developed to create multi-layered parks and trail experiences that are appealing to all ages, backgrounds and abilities.

ACTIONS:

TASK	NOTES	TIMEFRAME
1) Develop a Regional Parks Commission	include key partners within the community such as Island Timberlands, municipalities and First Nation involvement	short term
2) Encourage involvement of a diversity of partners	include a broad spectrum of interests for the long term sustainability of the parks and trails program. Involve key land owners and stakeholders in planning and land acquisition efforts	short and long term

6.2.7 GOAL 7: ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

To ensure the protection of natural resources within the ACRD’s regional park system.

POLICIES:

- 1) That recreational access be balanced with the preservation and enhancement of natural resources
- 2) That management plans be prepared to identify and approve recreational activities and trail alignments within each regional park
- 3) That opportunities for enhanced recreational activities be explored within the ACRD
- 4) That recreational and interpretive opportunities and facilities be developed to establish a stewardship presence within ACRD regional parks
- 5) That responsible use of the area be promoted by providing limited, non-obtrusive, durable and attractive signage to orient and inform parks and trail users about sensitive resources within ACRD regional parks
- 6) That ACRD regional parks become the centerpiece for environmental education and interpretation

ACTIONS:

TASK	NOTES	TIMEFRAME
1) That management plans be developed for regional parks that management plans provide for sustainable parks and trail design, route alignments and interpretive opportunities that minimize impacts to sensitive resources		Short, medium, and long term
2) That carrying capacity is tracked through visitor use monitoring and photo monitoring, visitor management and enforcement if required.		Short and long term

PART 7: EXISTING ACRD PARKS

7.1 PARKS WITHIN ACRD

From the perspective of mountain to coast outdoor experiences, the Alberni Clayoquot Regional District is fortunate to have a wide range of opportunities found through both parks and trails. A comprehensive list of all parks (local, provincial and national) and trails within the regional district is contained in **Appendix A**.

Presently, the ACRD owns several properties throughout the regional district that have park zoning. Some of these parcels are vacant lands that are unused while others function as parks or other use. The regional district also has partnership agreements in place permitting legal park or trail use, and access on properties that are owned by other jurisdictions. **Map 1** provides a spatial overview of the established parks & trails in the ACRD.

7.2 EXISTING PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENTS

The ACRD holds liability insurance coverage which allows the public to use certain parks under a licence of occupation or a partnership agreement. The tools for parks partnerships are essential for expanding the regional parks system.

7.3 ACRD COMMUNITY PARKS

Within the ACRD, local electoral area community parks focus on local neighbourhoods. Generally, they provide features such as children's playgrounds, tennis courts and neighborhood trails. They have been designed to serve nearby communities and are funded by the individual electoral areas in which they are located.

7.4 COMMUNITY PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSIONS

Advisory community park commissions exist in electoral areas A (Bamfield) and D (Sproat Lake) as both of these areas have small neighbourhood parks. Sproat Lake has also begun work on a community trail system.

ACRD EXISTING PARKS		
LONG BEACH	BAMFIELD	ALBERNI VALLEY
EXISTING REGIONAL PARKS		
		Alberni Inlet Trail (Licence Agreement)
		China Creek Regional Park
		Mount Arrowsmith
EXISTING COMMUNITY PARKS		
Willowbrae Park	Centennial Park	Cougar Smith Park
	Waterfront Parcel A	Evergreen Park
	Waterfront Parcel B	Faber Park
	West Park (West Bamfield)	Nordstrom Park
		Boat Launch Great Central Lake
EXISTING PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENTS		
		Log Train Trail (Lease Agreement)
Salmon Beach Public Square (Permit Agreement)		

Table 4. ACRD Existing Parks

The following section provides a general overview of the ACRDs existing parks.

7.4.1 CENTENNIAL PARK

This ACRD owned 14 acre site is located in east Bamfield and serves many important purposes for the local residents and visitors. An Information Centre with gift shop is staffed throughout the summer season, while two gazebos with BBQ grills, playground equipment, washrooms, and a pay phone are available for visitors year round. The campsite includes fire pits, a cookhouse, and showers. A boat launch with associated moorage for several boats, a paved sports arena for street hockey and basketball, and community gardens with 20 beds are also on site. The Bamfield Memorial Pavilion is available for memorial services and public performances at this park. There is also a pump-out station for RV's and boats, as well as water hoses. For more information please call 250 728-3006.

<http://bamfieldcommunity.ca/resources/visitors/parks-and-recreation-information>.

7.4.2 WEST PARK

West Park, located in West Bamfield, has a community garden, playground, picnic area, and ball field.

7.4.3 CHINA CREEK REGIONAL PARK

China Creek Regional Park was originally owned and operated by the province as a provincial park. In the 1980's it was transferred to the ACRD. Since then, its primary role has been to provide camping opportunities for people fishing. The park is under lease to the Port Alberni Port Authority which operates a marina on the adjoining foreshore. As of 2008, a new twenty year lease was negotiated providing a percentage of campground fees returned to the regional

district for regional park purposes. China Creek has 250 campsites, 170 of which are serviced. The China Creek Marina provides amenities to campers as well as 188 boat slips.

7.4.4 MOUNT ARROWSMITH

Mt. Arrowsmith at 1819 meters is the highest mountain in southern Vancouver Island. Its location makes it accessible to a broad population and the park has multiple trail routes that provide alpine hiking and mountain biking opportunities for all levels of experience and fitness.

Arrowsmith is situated just east of the head of the Alberni Inlet between the Englishman and Cameron River watersheds in a region where the distance from tidewater on the Pacific to that on the Strait of Georgia at Parksville is a mere 40km. Most routes on the mountain can be undertaken as a day trip from cars. There are numerous trailheads accessible, depending on the time of year and routes selected.

The ACRD owns the northern Mt. Arrowsmith Regional Park, however the park is located within the Regional District of Nanaimo (who also own the southern Mt. Arrowsmith Massif) The RDN has acquired crown land on the adjoining massif of Mount Arrowsmith. With the demise of the ski area, the ACRD has approached RDN to see whether it has an interest in acquiring the regional park on Mt. Cokely Ridge and managing it jointly with the massif.

7.4.5 WILLOWBRAE TRAIL

Willowbrae Park on the north end Ucluelet Inlet. This is currently an undeveloped community park.

7.4.6 ALBERNI INLET TRAIL

The Alberni Inlet Trail is classified as a Regional Park and is one of the most scenic trails in the Alberni Valley, with spectacular views over the Alberni Inlet, Mount Arrowsmith and the City of Port Alberni. Stage 1 of this linear park stretches southwards from Ship Creek Road just south of the City of Port Alberni, 13 km to China Creek Regional Park. Stage 2 takes the trail further south from Underwood Cove along the historic CNPR trail route to Franklin River. ACRD holds a 'Licence' from Island Timberlands for the portions of the trail located on Island Timberlands private lands.

7.4.7 EVERGREEN PARK

This 8.84 ha park, located in the Beaver Creek Electoral Area E was formerly an elementary school property. Current amenities include 3.9 ha of open space, informal trails, a 3342m² riding arena for equestrian activities. The park is well suited for equestrian activities, although routine maintenance, repair and development are needed.

7.4.8 NORDSTROM PARK

A donation of private land for park purposes was made adjacent to the Beaver Creek Firehall called Nordstrom Park.

7.4.9 BOAT LAUNCH AT GREAT CENTRAL LAKE

This area was acquired by the ACRD through a subdivision and provides water access to Great Central Lake.

7.4.10 COUGAR SMITH PARK

This 2.4 ha community park is located in the Sproat Lake Electoral Area and was formerly an elementary school. The amenities at this park include: bike park, tennis courts, ball field, playground, basketball courts, and a covered picnic area.

7.4.11 FABER PARK

This park provides water access for the upland residents of Sproat Lake. There is a public dock for use.

7.4.12 LOG TRAIN TRAIL

ACRD holds a 'Lease' for recreational use from the Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure. The Log Train Trail Lease starts at the power line between Block 80 and Lot 17 (east of the Cherry Creek Golf Course) continues northwest to Woolsey Road.

7.4.12 OTHER PARKS

There are several areas within the regional district where the ACRD has acquired land through the subdivision process. These lands are zoned as park and are generally passive parks. Examples of these passive parks includes lands at; Willowbrae Rd, Faber Rd, Highland Drive, Karen Place, Bloedel Dr.

PART 8: MANAGEMENT CHALLENGES

8.1 UNIQUE MANAGEMENT PRESCRIPTIONS AND GOVERNANCE POLICIES

The lands within the ACRD are owned by several layers of government as well as private landowners who include forestry companies. Until recently, the public had the ability to recreate freely within private forestry lands. This permission was granted in the past because users were most often forestry workers who had become “weekend stewards” of the land. Unfortunately, today, a few of the many recreationalists pose considerable threats to forest land owners. These few recreationalists have caused forest fires, become lost, camped illegally, left trash, dumped refuse and generally behaved disrespectfully. As the forestry owners are liable for incidents on their properties, they in some cases have limited access or closed access altogether. It is for this reason that the public is no longer permitted to freely recreate on private forestry lands.

In the future, forest companies may be open to discussions surrounding public access if the regional district or volunteer groups carry individual insurance policies and if formal agreements are drawn up to cover the liability risks and the costs of damages incurred. **Appendix C** provides an example of an access agreement that can be put in place between two or more parties. It is important to understand that each land owner may have their own set of regulating policies and procedures and that the ACRD is a unique land manager. Policies adopted by the ACRD will only apply to ACRD lands unless partnership agreements can be formally arranged, legally permitting activities and uses between the signed land owners.

8.2 LIABILITY

A number of liability issues and concerns have been raised through the public engagement process and also by the consultants during field work. Some of their key issues and concerns include fire, vandalism, theft and environmental destruction including erosion and vegetation loss. The implementation of a regional parks program would provide the following benefits and help to mitigate some of the detrimental impacts currently ongoing.

- When parks and trails are designed and built to a specific standard, the level of risk and liability to the landowner or easement holder is greatly reduced.
- Park managers (land owners or those who are legally accountable for protecting the land) have the ability and responsibility to manage trails and users to avoid conflict, reduce impacts on the environment and improve the overall trail experience for all users.
- Local government can purchase lands or work in partnership with other public or private land owners to formalize public access for trails

- Agreements can be made whereby land management groups (such as insured non-profits) can hold the liability insurance for a formally agreed upon trail easement across private property when the owner is favorable to public access. (Insurance can be approximately \$1500 - \$2500 per year so the non-profit must be organized and likely have paying members who annually cover these costs)
- Incentives such as tax deductions or land swaps are some of the tools that land management agencies use to reward private land holders for allowing public access through their lands.

PART 9: PARK CLASSIFICATIONS

A rich and diverse parks and trails inventory should include a variety of types such as marine parks, open space areas, nature preserves, neighbourhood parks, linear parks, community gardens, active recreation parks, special purpose parks, nature trails, canoe/kayak routes, and roadside pathways.

Most park systems are predicated upon a classification system that defines the characteristics of each type of park category (e.g. community playgrounds, natural recreation parks, wilderness parks, etc.) and a set of park standards which help to define the minimally acceptable levels of service and facilities for each category. This information is generally provided in site specific park management plans.

The following Park Classification System was developed to represent the unique landscapes and biogeoclimatic regions that are characteristics of the Alberni-Clayoquot Regional District. The classifications provide an overview of the management needs that are required for the wide range of possible facilities and services that may be envisioned for each park.

9.1 PROPOSED PARK CLASSIFICATIONS

The following classification system has been customized for the ACRD to ensure that the future regional parks system considers the wide range of sensitive ecosystems and landscapes as well as recreational needs for the broader community. **Appendix D** provides a Community Profile which outlines the biogeoclimatic zones of the ACRD as well as a list of endangered, threatened and listed species.

A total of 32 new sites have been identified in the six park classifications for the ACRD Regional Parks system. In order to represent and preserve the environmental, recreational, cultural and heritage values identified by the ACRD community, six park land classifications have been defined as follows:

TYPICAL PARK CLASSIFICATIONS		
CLASSIFICATION TYPE	PURPOSE	OPPORTUNITIES (USES)
BEACH ACCESS / MARINE TRAIL	Intended to provide year-round public access to and from the shores of the ocean, lakes, rivers, wetlands, wetland, estuaries and waterways. The intensity of development is dependent on the sensitivity and characteristics of each site and may provide for a connected network of water-based destinations and amenities where multiple water based activities can be promoted in a safe, legal and sustainable manner. Marine recreation infrastructure is recommended for the beach accesses and marine trails. Some designated routes may consider having toilet facilities, drinking water, fire pits, camp sites, picnic facilities, emergency shelters, evacuation routes and safety information, access permits and check in-out procedures. Educational opportunities are possible to encourage respect for oceans, rivers, lakes and watersheds and their habitats.	Beach activities, fishing, swimming, picnicking, canoeing/kayaking, sailing, windsurfing, kite boarding, paddle boarding and where appropriate, boat launching. Event and festival hosting
ACTIVE RECREATION AREA	Intended to provide year-round opportunities for promoting community and active, healthy lifestyles through the development of recreational assets such as arenas, sports fields, equestrian facilities, leisure centers, exercise loops, frisbee golf courses, bike parks, pump tracks, skate parks, dog parks, camp sites and regional playgrounds. A wide range of indoor and outdoor recreation opportunities should be capable of sustaining a high level and variety of recreational and other public use activities and locations. Active recreation areas may be regional destinations or community serving and may be associated with waterfront access.	rock climbing, nature appreciation, outdoor exercise loops, dog walking, geocaching, frisbee golf, camping, mountain bike skill development, sports fields, equestrian facilities, leisure center, events and festival hosting
TRAIL	Provide a year-round linear corridor access to defined or multiple user groups. Trails provide the legal and physical structure for trail-based recreation activities as well as local pedestrian and cycling commuter options. They aim to link communities, key regional destinations, provide access to areas having scenic and special interest qualities, and or national or provincial recreation opportunities. They can also be located within regional district parks and other recreation sites. The regional trail system is funded by the regional parks function and the community trails are funded through community parks.	non-motorized trail based activities including walking, hiking, bicycling, horseback riding, cross country skiing, horse-drawn carriages, electric scooters, events and festival hosting
CONSERVATION	Provide for low-impact, passive outdoor recreation opportunities such as nature	walking, hiking, cycling, horseback riding in some areas, nature

<p>AREA</p>	<p>appreciation and wilderness hiking. Focus is on conservation and protection of natural values of the area. These areas could be further classified to include wilderness preserve which could protect highly sensitive, locally or regionally unique and significant natural areas and endangered or provincially red listed species. Levels of visitor use and development are contingent upon the capacity of the “preserved feature” to withstand use. Wilderness preserves may or may not serve recreational needs with trails or public access. IBAs (important bird areas as designated by the province are a good example of sites that should be protected within conservation areas.</p>	<p>appreciation, picnicking and leisure and interpretive activities, events and festival hosting</p>
<p>ARTS/CULTURAL DESTINATION</p>	<p>Celebrates a regionally significant destination, or cultural feature such as First Nations or heritage destinations. These regionally significant destinations promote public appreciation and understanding of the site, celebrate the legacy of key ACRD people and events.</p>	<p>regional facility development for events and programming of various activities. Interpretive facilities, nature center, museums, art galleries, community gathering places, event and festival hosting.</p>
<p>OFF HIGHWAY VEHICLE PARK</p>	<p>A formalized system of destinations linked together by OHV trails specifically designed, but not limited to motorized use. Parks infrastructure might include toilets, drinking water, campsites, interpretive opportunities</p>	<p>ATVs, OHVs, dirt bikes, snowmobiles, and other motorized users. The parks are open to other users, however at their own risk and level of enjoyment. Fee based camping or hut to hut experiences should be encouraged. Event and festival hosting</p>

Table 5. Typical Park Classifications

PART 10: ACQUISITION

10.1 GENERAL ACQUISITION CRITERIA

Four main goals for parks acquisition have been identified for the ACRD regional parks program. The following criteria must be met for each land parcel being considered for acquisition.

1) Protecting large intact areas

Larger areas offer more protected interior habitat, shown to be required breeding and other life functions such as resting, foraging, hiding for many species. Studies have shown that habitat patches over 30 acres support breeding bird populations. Larger areas are also more efficient to manage and allow for more community access.

2) Protecting sites with exceptional biodiversity values (habitats and species)

A site may demonstrate exceptional values based on its ability to support habitats and species identified as rare or under threat in region or province, or because of its condition in providing highly functioning ecological habitat, with relatively few invasive species.

3) Improving connectivity within a regional system of natural areas

Long-term sustainability of the natural area system depends on connectivity to larger protected areas outside of the municipal areas and between large protected natural area parks within urban areas. Connectivity is important for both aquatic and terrestrial ecosystems, allowing migration between large habitat areas.

4) Buffering current natural areas

Common threats to urban natural areas include conflicting land uses and invasive species on their boundaries. Buffering currently protected areas can help reduce these threats, make management more efficient, and provide access to neighborhoods and a network of pedestrian and bicycle trails.

10.2 COMMUNITY WISH LIST

As a result of these criteria, **Appendix A** provides a comprehensive list of sites and experiences that were identified either through public engagement, meetings, and official community plans as opportunities for regional parks and trails. Each community suggestion has been classified as per community needs and relative area/ sub region to show equal representation across the ACRD.

PART 11: FORMALIZING AND FUNDING PARKS AND TRAILS

It is likely that the funds necessary to acquire lands under the regional parks and trails program will be greater than funds budgeted. Therefore, the regional board will need to be strategic in the investment of the regional park funds. A key objective of a regional parks program might be to continually build partnerships and to have financial leveraging arrangements made with other levels of governments, grant funding organizations, land trusts, community groups and developers to secure acquisition of lands for regional parks. Having options and a flexible strategy in place will help to expand opportunities to achieve priorities identified in this plan.

The timing of lands becoming available for acquisition by the regional district may be influenced by a number of factors including: 1) funding availability (both ACRD and external funding partnership arrangements such as grants and fundraising campaigns), 2) coordination with other levels of government and 3) willingness or needs of the landowner. Lands to be acquired under a Regional Parks and Trails Program must be consistent with the Regional Parks & Trails Strategic Plan, unless otherwise approved by the Board. To achieve this objective, the Plan recommends establishment of one or more of the following funding options to support the Regional Parks Program objectives.

PARKLAND ACQUISITION AND FUNDING OPTIONS		
ACQUISITION	Regional Parkland Tax Acquisition Fund	Regional parks has the capacity to establish a regional parks levy under a regional parks program. The funds annually generated in this fund would be applied towards land acquisition opportunities that arise for proposed regional park sites identified in the plan. The Regional Parkland Acquisition Fund (RPAF) would be maintained separately from the annual budget to operate the regional parks and trails system, with expenditure of the funds only on land purchased for regional parks and trails. The funds accumulated would be dependent upon the rate established and the duration or the tax, which will require direction and approval from the regional board. An average range of tax contribution to regional district regional parks on Vancouver Island is \$30.00 per household in 2014.
	Long-term Borrowing Bylaw (LTBB)	One of the advantages of a LTBB is long term amortizations, (20 years +) which provide the capacity to respond to near term acquisition opportunities without being limited to funds available under the current year’s budget. While the total cost of borrowing may be greater through Long Term Borrowing, an advantage is the capacity to spread out repayments over a number of budget years versus a “pay-as-you go” approach which could require significant budget allocation demands of the Board in any given year. A second advantage of long term borrowing is the ability for existing and future residents to contribute proportionally to the acquisition of regional park sites over time. Existing residents are not unnecessarily burdened in the short term with acquisition costs of regional park sites that provide long term outdoor recreation and environmental benefits for the region as a whole. Regional board approval of a Long Term Borrowing Bylaw to support land acquisition would require public confirmation through an alternative approval process.
	ACRD Parks Endowment Fund	The regional board could establish a regional parks and trails donation/endowment fund that would accept monetary gifts for parcels that meet the land acquisition criteria outlined in this plan. Such a fund could be further supported and promoted by a volunteer group,

		with administrative assistance and oversight by ACRD Parks.
	Annual Allocation	The allocation of funds will be annually determined by the ACRD Board for the management, operation and provision of amenities within regional parks and trails. The level of funding approved annually by the regional board will foremost be applied to upgrade existing infrastructure so that it is efficient and sustainable with regard to upkeep costs safe operation and maintenance service levels. In future years, annual budget consideration should be guided in part by the number of new regional park sites acquired under the regional parks and trails program, the management plans for each new site reviewed and adopted by the Regional Board and for budgetary considerations of the Regional Board as influenced by other funded programs and priorities within the Regional District.
FUNDING	Incentives	It is possible for local governments to provide tax incentives to property owners for allowing public access across their lands and also for donation of time or materials to the ACRD for park improvement purposes.
	Grant	Grants are non-repayable funds disbursed by one party (grant makers), often a government department, corporation, foundation or trust, to a recipient, often (but not always) a nonprofit entity, educational institution, business or an individual. In order to receive a grant, some form of "Grant Writing" often referred to as either a proposal or an application is usually required. There are many grants available to local governments and their partners for well-planned projects.
	ACRD Park Legacy/ Donation Fund	A legacy fund could be established with continual opportunities for business or the public to donate to ongoing parks and trails projects. This fund could include donations for commemorative programs and or items such as tree planting, benches, viewing platforms, bike racks, bridges, cabins, shelters, boardwalk planks etc. A list of key donors could be established to celebrate their support of the community and regional parks. Tax credits should be provided for donors who make contributions to a legacy fund.
	Development Cost Charges	Authorization under the Local Government Act permits establishment of development cost charges (DCCs) as monetary charges that local governments can apply to new developments to assist in providing specific services to residents of those new developments. The provision of parks is one of the services for which DCCs can be charged. While park DCCs are commonly applied at the municipal level for municipal and community parks, the application of DCCs have also recently begun to be applied in B.C. for regional parks.
ACCESS	Right of Way/ Easement	A right of way is a non-possessory right of use and/or entry onto the real property of another without possessing it. It is best typified in the right of way which one landowner, A, may enjoy over the land of another, B. An easement is considered as a property right in itself at common law and is still treated as a type of property in most jurisdictions. Easements can be granted and defined to serve specific purposes such as access to a given parcel of land or conservation as described below.
	Lease	A lease is a contractual arrangement calling for the lessee (user) to pay the lessor (owner) for use of an asset.

Conservation Easement	The ACRD can create conservation easements with private landowners to permanently protect certain conservation values in the ACRD. These values include wildlife habitats, rich agricultural lands, and scenic landscapes, among others. These easements not only restrict certain types of development, they also require that the Conservancy partner with current and future easement landowners to help steward the land.
Access Easement	Access easements are formally written permission agreements allowing the “grantee” access to a parcel of land owned by the “grantor” for purposes such as trail use, fishing use, hunting or gathering.

Table 6. Parkland Acquisition and Funding Options

PART 12: IMPLEMENTATION OPTIONS

WEIGHING FACTORS	OPTION ONE	OPTION TWO	OPTION THREE
Staffing Options	REMAIN STATUS QUO (Staff oversees contractors and volunteer operations)	HIRE CONTRACTOR (Develop management and other recommended plans. Parks contractor can be hired to organize volunteer programs and events for regional parks)	HIRE PARKS STAFF (Develop management and other recommended plans. This new staff member can oversee volunteer programs and events for the regional parks)
Cost	Same cost as currently funded by ACRD. LOW	Same costs to ACRD, contractor would operate on a contract basis. MEDIUM	Costs of a new employee, however costs may be offset by new tax levy and or grants available once the Strategic Plan is adopted and individual management plan projects are determined. HIGH
Volunteer Happiness Scale	Volunteers can be self-regulating under part-time staff guidance. LOW	Volunteers are self-regulating under part time staff guidance. Volunteers do not always work in an effective manner without guidance and often become overworked and burnt out. LOW	Parks manager can oversee volunteer programs and set priorities and budgets based on a common vision. When guided by a staff member full time, volunteers are provided with meaningful, encouraging work. They are less likely to burn out. HIGH
Liability (Public Relations & Success of Program)	HIGH	MEDIUM	LOW
Effectiveness	LOW	MEDIUM	HIGH
Long Term Public Support	MEDIUM	LOW	HIGH
Timeframe	SLOW	MEDIUM	FAST

Table 7. Implementation Options

PART 13: SUSTAINABLE PARKS DESIGN

Sections 877 and 941 of the Local Government Act provide policies made for parks planning and the reduction of greenhouse gases. Local Government Act regulations require regional districts to conserve and protect water, natural resources and air quality through the reduction of greenhouse gases. As a result, nature based recreational choices are not only becoming popular, they are also becoming a requirement. Nature-based activities require less capital costs up front and also require less maintenance over the long term, making them a sustainable choice.

Within the field of parks and recreation, the commitment to sustainable management practices provides an opportunity to address many of our most pressing challenges, such as ensuring the design and construction of parks is balanced with long-term maintenance requirements, enhancing community lifestyles, and reducing the consumption of resources.

Sustainable parks are designed, constructed and operated to address issues facing the community and surrounding region, such as storm water management or improving air quality by promoting alternative transportation, reducing motor vehicle trips, and even planting trees. New aesthetic forms emerge for parks when based on sustainable development concepts, starting with initial consideration of the surrounding landscape around the park. Sustainable Parks can significantly decrease water use by reducing irrigation needs through the use of rain gardens and recycled water. Sustainable (Green) park buildings typically save up to 60% in annual energy costs when compared to conventional building designs. Building operational costs are also substantially lower. Planning, designing, constructing, and operating Sustainable Parks can and should include the following elements where possible:

- minimizing environmental impacts from the onset through sensitive siting of a park/trail within the landscape and careful consideration of the various uses within the park boundaries
- protecting and enhancing habitat areas
- educating the public about the value of natural resource stewardship
- incorporating rain water reuse, grey water for irrigation, efficient irrigation systems, etc.
- recycling waste products and striving to limit waste as much as possible
- minimizing pollution impacts resulting from park features and user activities
- utilizing green building techniques (e.g., solar power, natural lighting) to reduce energy costs
- promoting alternative forms of transportation (e.g., greenways, bike trails, safe routes
- reducing maintenance and operations costs
- involving the public as partners, customers, volunteers, participants, stakeholders, etc.
- encouraging partnerships with various organizations noxious and invasive plant management control and planning

13.1 SUSTAINABLE TRAILS

Within a growing number of jurisdictions, including the ACRD communities are showing an increased desire and need for linear parks, also known as trails. Trails are essential for assisting pedestrian, cycling, equestrian and other users to connect to and from key destinations within a region. The benefits of a trail network must be balanced with the need to protect our natural environment. Trail design and construction must:

- strive to have minimal impacts on our natural surroundings
- be designed with consideration of the local environment and the intended use
- avoid sensitive areas and protect our sensitive assets
- adhere to best techniques and to prescribed standards
- include efforts in public education and enforcement

Trails that adversely impact the environment will not only have a low aesthetic value, but will also incur a high maintenance cost.

Sustainable trails are trails that are designed and constructed to minimize erosion and environmental degradation. They are safe and pose minimal liability risk to land managers. Sustainable trails can range from easy to difficult depending on the design and steepness of grades, the width of the trail and the alignment chosen. Sustainable trails can be challenging and winding or breathtaking and open, and they can be designed to accommodate all users including mountain bikers and equestrians. They do require routine maintenance and monitoring to preserve their longevity and function.

The requirement to build sustainable trails for safety and liability reasons, has been brought into place by several levels of government including other regional districts, Parks Canada, BC Parks and the Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure. By requiring sustainable layout and construction standards early in the process minimal erosion and environmental degradation will result, as well as low long term maintenance costs.

13.2 ACRD PARKS AND TRAILS

The ACRD has a myriad of existing parks and trails and unique outdoor experiences. These include early farm trails, historic logging routes, abandoned paved roads, and animal trails that have become people or “social trail” routes. Social trails are trails created by human beings or animals that have been worn into the ground from taking the path of least resistance to a particular destination. In spite of advanced planning in some cases or little planning in others, many of the trails in the ACRD are at present, not legal or formalized.

Some trails follow paths that were previously created by wild animals and do not meet basic layout standards that require maximum conformation to grades and slope. As a result, sections

of existing trails may not be sustainable. Evidence exists in the parks, trail corridors and open spaces as the trails have become degraded from soil loss and erosion resulting in damage to local vegetation and habitat.

Without sustainable grades the trail system will not last. It will become eroded and dangerous and will require significant maintenance over the long term. This said, trails in the ACRD pass through some of Vancouver Island's most fragile ecosystems and therefore need to be sustainable through good design. By respecting local landscapes and ecosystems, trails can be used to help to conserve sensitive lands and not contribute to overuse and environmental degradation.

13.3 TRAIL STANDARDS

Trail standards have been provided by the Ministry of Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Operations Recreation Manual, Chapter 10 and could be directly applied to the ACRD regional parks system.