qathet Regional District
Parks & Trails Strategy
2023-2033

qathet
REGIONAL DISTRICT

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+
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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The qathet Regional District (qRD) Parks and Trails Strategy will guide the development, operation, management and acquisition of regional parks and trails over the next 10 years.

The Strategy presents an overview of the existing regional parks and trails system, identifies trends and challenges, and puts forward a vision, goals and actionable recommendations to guide future direction of parks services. The Strategy is supported by community engagement and summarizes the community's desires and aspirations.

WHAT'S IN THE STRATEGY

The following components make up this Strategy:

Chapter 1: Introduction – introduces the purpose of the strategy, explains the planning process and how this work is situated in the context of previous planning processes in the qRD.

Chapter 2: Current State – describes the existing regional parks and trails system and includes an analysis of current and future parkland supply and distribution.

Chapter 3: Community Profile – provides a demographic profile of the qRD, summaries community engagement input and includes a synthesis of the key issues and parkland needs by electoral area.

Chapter 4: Vision and Goals – includes the vision, goals and recommendations of the Regional Parks and Trails Strategy to guide future management, planning, and acquisition.

Chapter 5: Implementation – includes short, medium and long term priorities for implementing the Strategy's recommendations.

WHAT WE HEARD

Two rounds of community engagement informed the recommendations in this plan. Issues and opportunities related to parks and trails that are top of mind for the community include:

- The desire for new parks and beach access trails

- The importance of connecting with and protecting nature

- The need for improved accessibility at parks and trails and safer connections between communities for all modes of transportation

- The desire for expanded recreation opportunities

- The importance of volunteer support and community collaboration

GOALS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Five goals emerged to support the qRD in achieving its vision for parks and trails. Each goal is supported by specific actions to be accomplished over the next 10 years.

Recommendation	Description	Time-frame Immediate: as soon as possible; Short: 0-3 yrs); Medium (3-10 yrs) or Long Term (10+ yrs)	Responsibility	Resource (Operational/ Staff Time)
Goal 1: Identify, acquire, and manage new regional parks and trails.				
Recommendation 1.1	Set a target to acquire an additional 21.3 hectares of parkland to maintain the current level of service for parks and trails as the population increases.	Immediate	In-house	Staff Time
Recommendation 1.2	Adopt a Parkland Acquisition Policy to guide decisions on acquisition of regionally significant parkland.	Short	In-house	Staff Time
Recommendation 1.3	Increase public access to the waterfront by acquiring and developing additional beach access trails.	Medium	In-house	Staff time to acquire permits. Development and maintenance costs will vary depending on environmental conditions.
Goal 2: Increase protection and management of natural areas.				
Recommendation 2.1	Create park management plans to determine the type, location, uses, and activities appropriate within regional parks to protect important habitat and ecosystems, and cultural features.	Medium	Consultant	$20,000-40,000 per park depending on size and complexity of the park
Recommendation 2.2	Collaborate with community groups and environmental organizations, agencies, and land managers to support the restoration and enhancement of fragmented habitats and ecosystems within regional parks.	Short	In-house	Staff Time
Goal 3: Strengthen community partnerships and volunteer resources.				
Recommendation 3.1	Continue to work with First Nations communities, other levels of government, community groups, non-profit agencies, private landowners, land trusts, and Crown land tenure holders to maintain and expand land use agreements and acquire additional parkland for recreation and conservation.	Immediate, on-going	In-house	Staff Time
Recommendation 3.2	Continue to develop the Parks, Properties and Trails Volunteer program to increase volunteering opportunities and support community organizations in assisting and contributing to regional parks, properties, and trails projects including ecological restoration, trail maintenance.	Short	In-house	Staff Time
Recommendation 3.3	Collaborate with Tla'amin, shíshálh, Klahoose, Nanoose, Homalco, K'ómoks and other Coast Salish First Nations to incorporate cultural information at regional parks and explore opportunities to protect culturally significant sites and incorporate traditional knowledge.	Medium	In-house	Allocate $10-,000- 20,000 annually to planning and implementation of collaborative projects.
Recommendation 3.4	Support community groups in their efforts to seek authorization for backcountry trails on Provincial land.	Medium	In-house	Staff Time

Recommendation	Description	Time-frame Immediate: as soon as possible; Short: 0-3 yrs); Medium (3-10 yrs) or Long Term (10+ yrs)	Responsibility	Resource (Operational/ Staff Time)
Goal 4: Enhance the user experience at parks and beach access trails.				
Recommendation 4.1	Develop a monitoring system to understand current levels of service and determine emerging needs.	Medium	In-house	Staff Time
Recommendation 4.2	Continue to assess regional parks to identify barriers to access and opportunities to provide improved accessibility for all ages and abilities.	Short	Consultant	$20,000 - $40,000
Recommendation 4.3	Provide clear accessibility information on the qRD's website, park webpages, and at trailheads.	Short	In-house	Staff Time
Recommendation 4.4	Ensure all regional parks and beach access trails are identified with signage.	Medium	In-house	$2,500 per site
Recommendation 4.5	Identify opportunities to incorporate more support amenities such as washrooms, signage, and parking at select regional parks and beach access trails.	Short	In-house/ Consultant	Staff Time. Allocate $15,000 - $25,000 annually for the maintenance and operations of 3-5 washrooms.
Goal 5: Support active transportation and a connected community.				
Recommendation 5.1	Determine the feasibility of creating regional active transportation corridors to connect regional parks and communities.	Long	Consultant	$150,000
Recommendation 5.2	Coordinate with other jurisdictions, First Nations, land managers, and landowners to identify partnership opportunities for active transportation initiatives.	Long	In-house	Staff Time
Recommendation 5.3	Develop an active transportation corridor implementation plan that identifies: • Priority ratings; • Estimated costs; • Jurisdictional/land ownership concerns; • Grant and other funding opportunities; and/or • Design considerations/standards.	Long	Consultant	$75,000-100,000

VISION

The parks and trails system preserves and enhances natural spaces, connects people to the waterfront, rich and biodiverse ecosystems such as forests and beaches, and each other. Supported by community partnerships, regional parks and trails provide diverse, accessible, and safe opportunities for relaxation and recreation that support health and wellness for all and a resilient environment for future generations.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- As the population of the qRD increases, demand for parks and beach access trails will continue to grow. Recognizing this need, the qRD will need an additional 21.3 hectares of parkland by 2031 and 45.4 hectares by 2041.

- Community engagement for this Strategy revealed that environmental protection and enhancing biodiversity are top of mind for the community. Acquiring parkland specifically for conservation purposes is a priority, aligning with the community's deep-rooted values of preserving their natural surroundings.

- Improving accessibility at parks and trails and providing opportunities for safe options for multiple modes of transportation is of utmost importance to residents.

- Increasing access to the shoreline, particularly on the islands, is very important to residents of the qRD.

- Community engagement for this Strategy confirmed that the success of the qRD's regional parks and trails system relies on the involvement of volunteers and active community participation. Their invaluable contributions and dedication play a crucial role in shaping and maintaining our vibrant outdoor spaces within the qRD community.

1 INTRODUCTION

qRD PARKS AND TRAILS

The qathet Regional District (qRD) is a local government authority located within the traditional territory of the Tla'amin, shíshálh, Klahoose, Homalco, K'ómoks, and several other Coast Salish First Nations on the west coast of British Columbia, at the north end of the Sunshine Coast. The Regional District's boundaries stretch from Jervis Inlet in the south to Toba Inlet in the north, and it is bordered by the Salish Sea and Malaspina Strait. The area spans 5,000 square kilometers and features unique and diverse landscapes including coastal Douglas-fir forests, shoreline, lake, and alpine ecosystems.

The qRD is a federation whose members include six Electoral Areas: A, B, C, D (Texada), E (Lasqueti Island), and The City of Powell River. Tla'amin Nation lands are not included under qRD jurisdiction. In 2021, the qRD had a population of 21,496 people, with most of the population living in the City of Powell River, approximately 65%, according to Statistics Canada. The Regional District's communities include both permanent and seasonal residents.

The Sunshine Coast Highway connects several communities from Saltery Bay to Lund with views from the mainland to the scenic islands off the coast. The Regional District is home to a diverse economy with roots in forestry, transportation, and ocean-related businesses. Being a coastal community, interaction with the ocean whether for travel, business, or recreation, is a defining feature of life in the region. The qRD features expansive backcountry recreation areas, spectacular lakes, and world-class mountain biking, hiking, and horseback riding trails.

The qRD's regional and community parks and beach access trails are vital in protecting the region's natural splendor and providing recreation opportunities for both residents and visitors. This Parks and Trails Strategy identifies community priorities and provides a decision-making framework for the acquisition of new parks and trails to ensure the community's needs are met over the next 10 years.
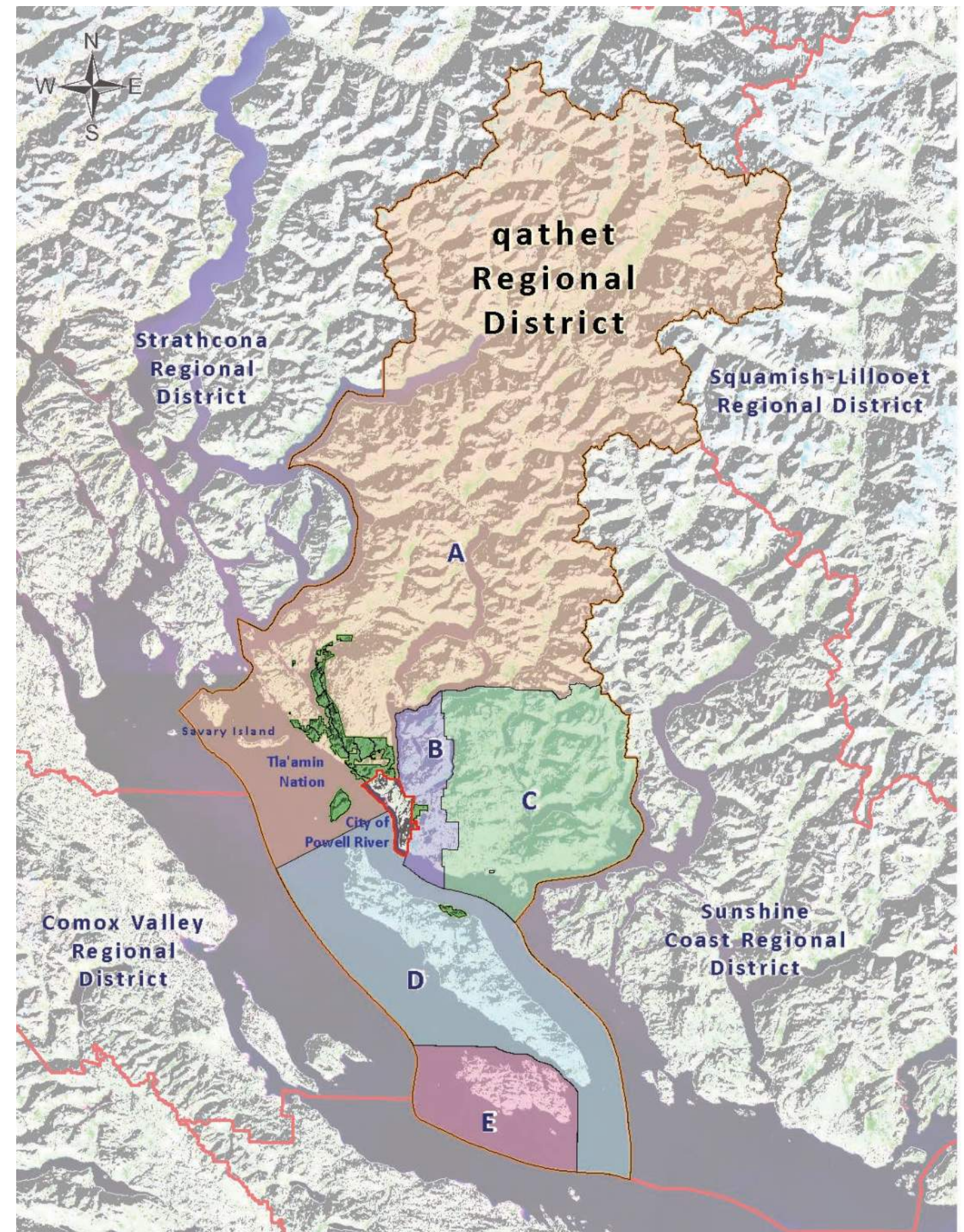
1.1 PURPOSE OF THE STRATEGY

The purpose of the Parks and Trails Strategy is to create a plan that builds on the successes of the qRD's previous park and trails work to guide the development, operation, management, and investment in regional and community parks and trails for the next 10 years.

The primary objectives of this Strategy are to:

• Provide an inventory of existing regional and community parks and trails and an analysis of potential gaps and future needs.

• Articulate a shared vision and goals for the qRD's parks and trails system that is informed by community engagement, past planning initiatives, and an analysis of the current parks and trails system.

• Provide a plan for implementing the recommendations for regional parks and trails included in the Strategy.

• Design a decision-making process to guide investment in regional and community parks and trails.

This strategy is written as a strategic document that is system-wide in scope and provides direction for the entire parks and trails system.

1.2 PLANNING PROCESS

This strategy was developed during five phases, including two rounds of community engagement. The planning process included the following:

Phase 1: The first phase of the process included background research, review of other related regional strategies and bylaws, and mapping of the existing regional parks and trails inventory.

Phase 2: The second phase included sites visits, discussions with Regional District staff, and community engagement. Four in-person open houses and two virtual open houses took place in November 2022. The goal of these sessions was to introduce the community to the project, develop an understanding of the community's values and priorities, and to identify challenges and opportunities related to parks and trails in the region. Public input was also gathered through an online survey.

Phase 3: This phase included the development of the draft Parks and Trails Strategy including the vision, goals, recommendations, and decision-making processes.

Phase 4: Phase 4 included a second round of community engagement and was important in reporting findings back to the community to ensure the vision, goals, actions and recommendations were aligned with the community's values. Round two of engagement included a second online survey, and virtual open house.

Phase 5: The fifth phase of the planning process included the development of the final Parks and Trails Strategy, and a presentation to the Regional Board.

PHASE 1
START-UP, INVENTORY AND ANALYSIS

PHASE 2
ROUND 1 COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

PHASE 3
DRAFT PARKS AND TRAILS STRATEGY

PHASE 4
ROUND 2 COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

PHASE 5
FINAL PARKS AND TRAILS STRATEGY

PREVIOUS REGIONAL PLANS & POLICIES

Past studies, plans, and policies have provided valuable background information and informed the development and key direction of this strategy.

Regional District Parks and Greenspace Plan (2010)

The Regional District Parks and Greenspace Plan provided the foundation for a parks and greenspace system that addressed the long-term needs and interests of the region, and guided the Regional District in prioritizing park development and investments.

Since 2010, the qRD has implemented recommendations from the Plan including:

• Developing beach access sites across the region (2014).

• Developing the Parkland Acquisition Strategy (2015).

• Developing the Regional District Trails Plan (2016).

• Developing an Invasive Plant Management Strategy (2017).

• Developing the Volunteer Program for Regional Parks, Properties and Trails which supports community organizations to assist in regional parks, properties, and trails projects (2022).

Parkland Acquisition Strategy (2015)

Developing a Parkland Acquisition Strategy was a recommendation in the Regional District Parks and Greenspace Plan (2010). The Strategy provides analysis of high priority acquisition sites and outlines the various options for acquisition.

Since 2015, the qRD has implemented recommendations from the Strategy including:

• Amending the Regional Park Conversion and Service Establishment Bylaw to increase the requisition limit.

• Establishing a statutory reserve fund for parkland acquisition purposes.

• Establishing non-statutory reserve funds for community parkland acquisition purposes in Electoral Areas A, B, C and D.

• Adopting community park service establishment bylaws for Electoral Areas A, B, C and D.

Regional Trails Plan (2016)

The development of a Regional Trails Plan was a recommendation in the Regional District Parks and Greenspace Plan (2010). The Plan provides a guide and framework for the development, management, and protection of the area's significant trail networks.

Since 2016, the qRD has implemented recommendations from the Plan including:

• Providing grants and aid to trail user groups that work to develop and maintain recreation trails on Provincial Crown lands.

• Entering into service provider agreements with trail user groups to provide insurance coverage through the Municipal Insurance Association (MIA).

• Volunteer user groups continue to collaborate with Rec Sites and Trails BC to implement the Regional Trails Plan.

2 CURRENT STATE

EXISTING PARKS AND TRAILS SYSTEM

Parks and trails are a vital asset to the region and are highly valued by the community for recreation opportunities that support health and wellness, access to nature and outdoor recreation, and protection of open space resources for future generations.

The current park inventory consists of 10 regional parks including two campgrounds. Regional parks range in size from 0.3 to 167.3 hectares, and together total 330.8 hectares of parkland. There are regional parks in each electoral area, but none in the City of Powell River or the Sechelt Indian Government District. The park inventory also includes 10 community parks and properties, which total approximately 19.4 hectares of parkland on Texada Island.

Existing trails operated by the qRD include 22 beach access trails and the Myrtle Creek Bike/ Pedestrian Bridge.

REGIONAL PARKS

Regional parks provide valuable recreational, ecological, and cultural amenities which attract visitors from across the qRD.

Under the Regional Parks Service, the qRD manages and protects 10 regional parks. All regional parks offer day-use facilities, and two have campgrounds.

Regional parks offer a wide variety of different outdoor recreation opportunities, including access to marine and lake shorelines for swimming and kayaking, picnic areas and outdoor barbecues, two disc-golf courses, sports courts, areas for community events including a bandshell and gazebo, washrooms, and playgrounds.

Regional Park Acquisition

Regional parks are located on lands that are owned by the Regional District or on Crown land leased from the province.

Funding Regional Parks

Regional parks are established by bylaw and financed by taxpayers from across the region.

Levels of Service

The level of maintenance, or service, at a park or trail depends on the type of structures present, environmental conditions, and the amount of use. All regional and community parks, beach access trails, and transportation corridors receive one of the following levels of service:

High: Significant infrastructure and maintenance obligations.

Medium: Grass mowing and minor infrastructure maintenance.

Low: Trail maintenance and pick up garbage.
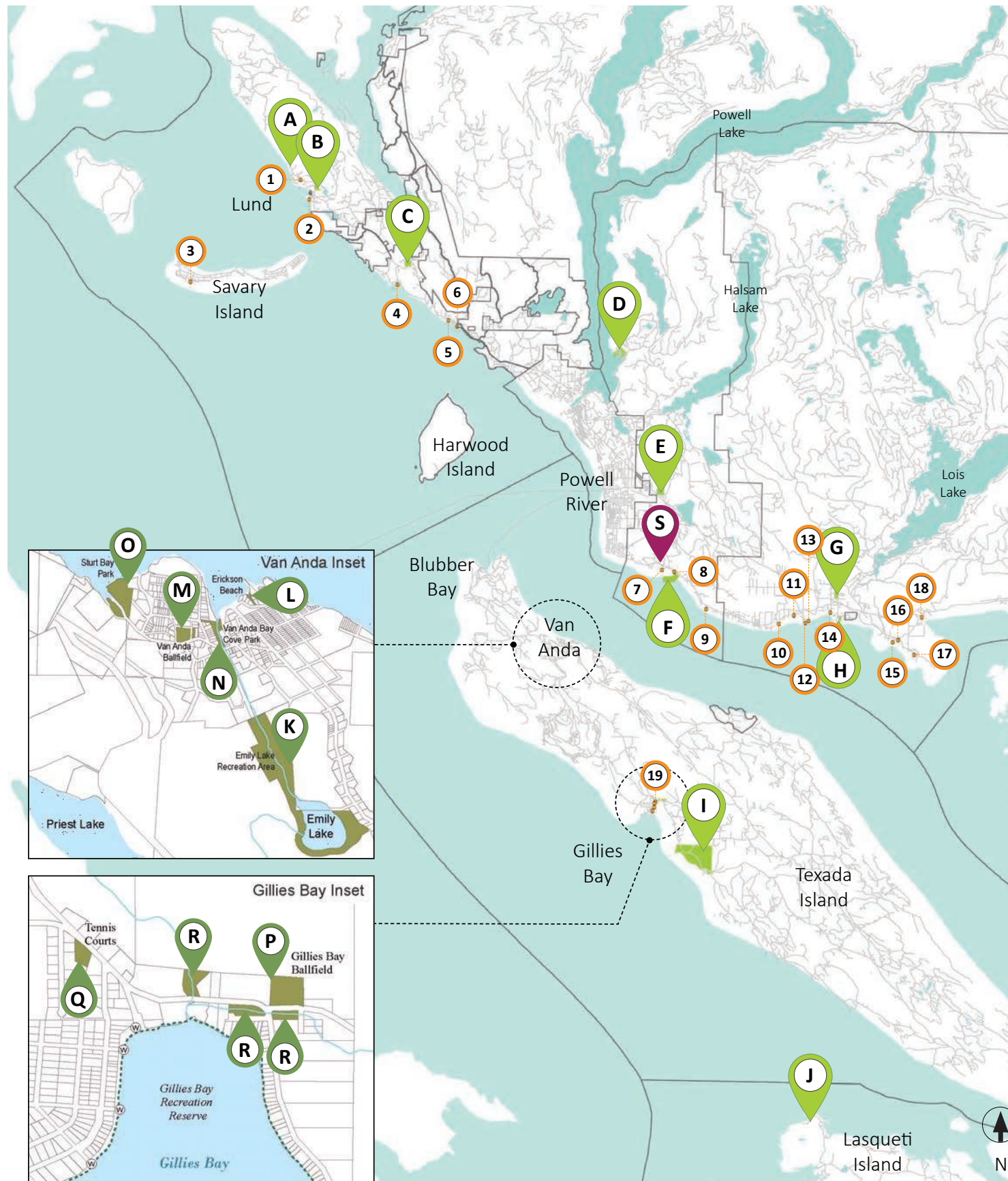
qathet Regional District parks service is composed of the following:

REGIONAL PARKS

A — Diver's Rock Regional Park

B — Klah Ah Men Lund Gazebo Regional Park

C — Craig Regional Park

D — Haywire Bay Regional Park

E — Paradise Exhibition Park

F — Myrtle Rocks Regional Park

G — Rossander Regional Park

H — Palm Beach Regional Park

I — Shelter Point Regional Park

J — Boot Point Regional Park

ACTIVE TRANSPORTATION CORRIDORS

S — Myrtle Creek Pedestrian/ Cycling Bridge

BEACH ACCESS TRAILS

1 — Finn Bay Road

2 — Long Acre Road

3 — Julian Road

4 — Emmonds Road

5 — Sturt Beach

6 — Southview Road

7 — Pebble Beach Road

8 — Myrtle Rocks

9 — Armour Road

10 — Broom Road

11 — Patrick Road

12 — Cove Road (look out)

13 — Mahood Road

14 — Phillips Road

15 — Hollingsworth Road

16 — Osprey Road

17 — Canoe Bay

18 — Thunder Bay Road

19 — Gillies Bay (3)

COMMUNITY PARKS

Van Anda Community Parks:

K — Emily Lake Recreation Area

L — Erickson Beach

M — Van Anda Ball Field

N — Van Anda Bay Cove Park

O — Sturt Bay Park

Gillies Bay Community Parks:

P — Gillies Bay Ball Field

Q — Gillies Bay Tennis Courts

R — 3 Vacant Parcels (designated Parks and Recreation)

TABLE 1. EXISTING REGIONAL PARKS INVENTORY

Electoral Area A

Park	Size	Land Status	Level of Service	Amenities
Craig Regional Park	12.49 ha	qRD License from Crown	Medium	Gazebo, BBQ, playing fields, disk golf course, playground, tennis courts
Diver's Rock Regional Park	0.5 ha	qRD Owned	Medium	Picnic table
Klah Ah Men Lund Gazebo Regional Park	6.03 ha	qRD Owned	Medium	Gazebo with seating and stage

Electoral Area B

Park	Size	Land Status	Level of Service	Amenities
Haywire Bay Regional Park (foreshore)	8.52 ha	qRD License from Crown	High	Two swimming beaches
Haywire Bay Regional Park (upland)	24.6 ha	qRD Owned	High	Individual and group campsites, wheelchair accessible campsite/outhouse, cabin, potable water, dry pit toilets, firewood sales, shower, playground
Myrtle Rocks Regional Park	28.89 ha	qRD License from Crown	Low	Picnic table
Paradise Exhibition Regional Park	14.61 ha	qRD License from Crown	Low	Equestrian riding ring, therapeutic riding centre club house, seasonal farmer's market

Electoral Area C

Park	Size	Land Status	Level of Service	Amenities
Palm Beach Regional Park	2.65 ha	qRD Owned	High	Playground, tennis courts, horseshoe toss, ball backstop, community kitchen, covered picnic area with BBQ, picnic tables, covered stage area, swimming beach, public washroom
Palm Beach Regional Park (parking lot)	0.41 ha	qRD License from Crown	High	Parking lot
Rossander Regional Park	7.1 ha	qRD Owned	Low	Walking trails

Level of Service: High (**Significant infrastructure and maintenance obligations**), Medium (Grass mowing and minor infrastructure), Low (Trail maintenance and garbage collection)

Electoral Area D (Texada)

Park	Size	Land Status	Level of Service	Amenities
Shelter Point Regional Park (Bella Maria)	167.31 ha	qRD Owned	High	Individual and group campsites, potable water, flush toilets, nature trails, parking, disk golf course, sani-dump
Shelter Point Regional Park (foreshore)	41.80 ha	qRD License from Crown	High	Swimming beach, boat launch, parking
Shelter Point Regional Park (upland)	15.56 ha	qRD Owned	High	Individual and group campsites, potable water, playground, seasonal food concession, covered gathering structure, flush toilets, showers, firewood sales, nature trails, picnic tables, horseshoe toss, sani-dump, parking

Electoral Area E (Lasqueti)

Park	Size	Land Status	Level of Service	Amenities
Boot Point Regional Park	0.34 ha	qRD Permit from MoTI	Low	Picnic table

Level of Service: High (Significant infrastructure and maintenance obligations) Medium (Grass mowing and minor infrastructure) Low (Trail maintenance and garbage collection)

COMMUNITY PARKS

Community parks serve local electoral areas and provide daily recreational needs.

Community parks offer a wide variety of different outdoor recreation opportunities including waterfront access, sports fields, sports courts, and natural areas. Some community parks are undeveloped land that could support community amenities in the future.

Community Park Acquisition and Funding

Community parks are located on lands that are owned by the Regional District, or on Crown land leased from the province.

While Electoral Area D (Texada Island) is currently the only electoral area with established community parks, community parks services have been established by bylaw for Electoral Areas A, B, C.

Community parkland is acquired by the qRD through the subdivision process when three or more additional new lots are created and the smallest lot is less than two hectare. Conditions for the dedication of park land, or payment in lieu of park dedication, are set out under Section 510 of the provincial Local Government Act. Payments retained during the subdivision process are set aside in a community park reserve fund for future parkland acquisition.

Community Parks on Texada

Texada Island has 10 community parks that are funded by Texada Island taxpayers only. These parks are managed by the qRD under the advice of the Texada Island Recreation Commission (TIRC).

TABLE 2. EXISTING COMMUNITY PARKS INVENTORY

Park	Size	Land Status	Level of Service
Emily Lake Recreation Area	12.99 ha	qRD License from Crown	Medium
Erickson Beach	0.14 ha	qRD Owned	Low
Gillies Bay Ball Field & Undeveloped Land (across School Road)	1.53 ha	qRD Owned	Medium
Gillies Bay Tennis Courts	0.39 ha	qRD Owned	Medium
Sturt Bay Park	2.72 ha	qRD License from Crown	Low
Undeveloped Land (across from library, preschool, seniors centre)	0.44 ha	qRD Owned	Low
Undeveloped Land (adjacent Van Anda Ball Field	0.11 ha	qRD Owned	Low
Undeveloped Land (dissected by Cranby Creek)	0.58 ha	qRD Owned	Low
Van Anda Ball Field (Smithson Park)	1.53 ha	qRD Owned	Medium
Van Anda Cove Park	0.071 ha	qRD Owned	Low

Level of Service: High (Significant infrastructure and maintenance obligations) Medium (Grass mowing and minor infrastructure) Low (Trail maintenance and garbage collection)

TRAILS

As part of the Regional Parks Service, the qRD manages and maintains 22 beach access trails and Myrtle Creek Bike/Pedestrian Bridge. All existing trails are located on Crown land leased from the province.

BEACH ACCESS TRAILS

Beach access trails allow public access to the waterfront throughout the qRD and provide the opportunity for water-based recreational activities like swimming and kayaking.

Beach Access Trail Acquisition

Beach access trails are located on Crown land leased from the province. All of the beach access trails are located on lands within provincial Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure (MoTI) right-of-way land.

Beach Access Trail Funding

Funding is provided through the Regional Parks Service. Maintenance is provided by the qRD and financed through annual park operating and maintenance costs.

TABLE 3. EXISTING BEACH ACCESS TRAILS INVENTORY

Electoral Area A		
Beach Access Trail	**Land Status**	**Level of Service**
Emmonds Road Beach Access Trail	qRD Permit from MoTI	Low
Finn Bay Road Beach Access Trail	qRD Permit from MoTI	Low
Julian Road Beach Access Trail (Savary Island)	qRD Permit from MoTI	Low
Long Acre Road Beach Access Trail	qRD Permit from MoTI	Low
Southview Road Beach Access Trail	qRD Permit from MoTI	Low
Sturt Road Beach Access Trail	qRD Permit from MoTI	Low

Electoral Area B		
Beach Access Trail	**Land Status**	**Level of Service**
Armour Road Beach Access Trail	qRD Permit from MoTI	Low
Myrtle Rocks Beach Access Trail	Private land access agreement	Low
Pebble Beach Access Trail	qRD Permit from MoTI	Low

Level of Service: High (Significant infrastructure and maintenance obligations), Medium (Grass mowing and minor infrastructure), Low (Trail maintenance and garbage collection)

TABLE 3. EXISTING BEACH ACCESS TRAILS INVENTORY

Electoral Area C		
Beach Access Trail	**Land Status**	**Level of Service**
Broom Road Beach Access Trail	qRD Permit from MoTI	Low
Canoe Bay	qRD Permit from MoTI	Low
Cove Road Beach Lookout	qRD Permit from MoTI	Low
Hollingsworth Road Beach Access Trail	qRD Permit from MoTI	Low
Osprey Road Beach Access Trail	qRD Permit from MoTI	Low
Patrick Road Beach Access Trail	qRD Permit from MoTI	Low
Scotch Fir Point Road Beach Access Trail	qRD Permit from MoTI	Low
Thunder Bay Road Beach Access Trail	qRD Permit from MoTI	Low

Electoral Area D (Texada)		
Beach Access Trail	**Land Status**	**Level of Service**
Ash Street Beach Access Trail	qRD Permit from MoTI	Low
Balsam Street Beach Access Trail	qRD Permit from MoTI	Low
Oak Street Beach Access Trail	qRD Permit from MoTI	Low
Patton Road Beach Access Trail	qRD Permit from MoTI	Low

Level of Service: High (**Significant infrastructure and maintenance obligations**), Medium (Grass mowing and minor infrastructure), Low (Trail maintenance and garbage collection)

ACTIVE TRANSPORTATION CORRIDORS

The Myrtle Creek Bike/Pedestrian Bridge provides a designated active transportation corridor and safe access for pedestrians and cyclists to travel to and from the City of Powell River.

Active Transportation Corridor Acquisition

This active transportation corridor is located on provincial Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure (MoTI) right-of-way land.
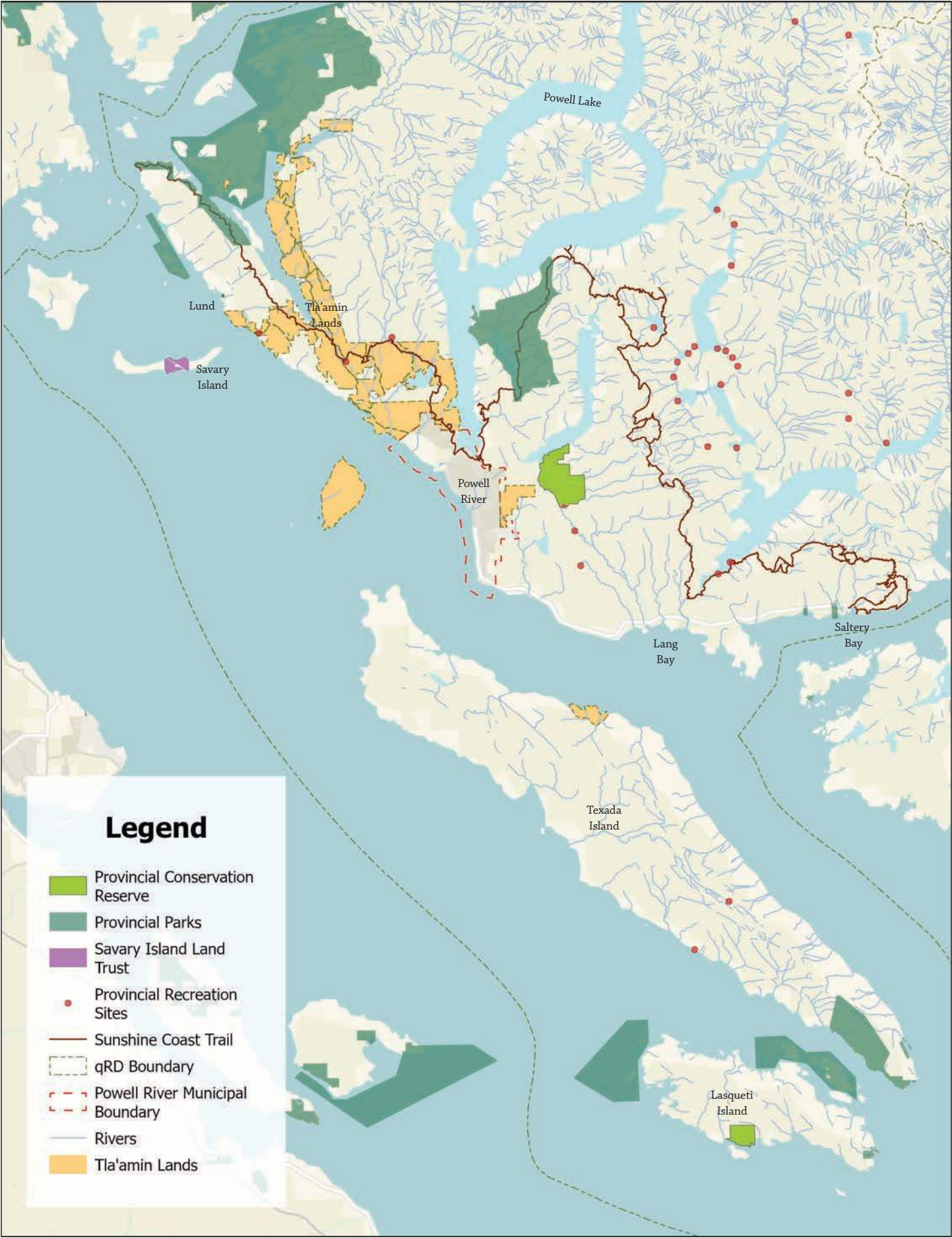
Active Transportation Corridor Funding

Funding for operations and maintenance is part of the Regional Parks Service annual budget.

TABLE 4. EXISTING ACTIVE TRANSPORTATION CORRIDORS INVENTORY

Electoral Area B	
Active Transportation Corridor	**Land Status**
Myrtle Creek Bike/Pedestrian Bridge	qRD Permit from MoTI

Legend

- ▬ Provincial Conservation Reserve
- ▬ Provincial Parks
- ▬ Savary Island Land Trust
- • Provincial Recreation Sites
- ▬ Sunshine Coast Trail
- ▢ qRD Boundary
- ▭ Powell River Municipal Boundary
- ▬ Rivers
- ▬ Tla'amin Lands

OTHER PARKS, TRAILS, AND PROTECTED AREAS

There are various types of parks and protected areas in the qRD that are managed by different governmental and non-governmental organizations. These include:

- Provincial parks, marine parks, provincial reserves, and recreational areas managed by the province (BC Parks) and Recreation Sites and Trails BC.

- Conservation areas managed by land conservation organizations/ agencies through land trusts. The Nature Trust of British Columbia, Islands Trust Fund, and Savary Island Land Trust (SILT) own and manage several properties in the qRD.

- The City of Powell River has a parks system with neighbourhood parks, community sports parks and city parks including athletic fields, playgrounds and a major waterfront park and campsite.

- Trails and recreation areas managed by local community groups on private land, Crown land and Tla'amin First Nation land, including the Sunshine Coast Trail and Mt. Mahoney trail networks.

Other parks and greenspaces in the qathet region

164 hectares of city parks

15,983 hectares of provincial parks and recreation areas

985 hectares of provincial reserves

242 hectares of conservation areas

PARTNERSHIPS

LAND USE AGREEMENTS

Many regional parks and trails within the qRD are located on land not owned by the qRD and have been made possible through various land use agreements.

- **qRD Owned:** There are seven regional parks, and seven community parks on land that is owned by the qRD, about 227.2 hectares, or 65% of regional and community parks in the qRD.

- **Crown Land Leases:** There are six regional parks, and three community parks that exist on Crown land leased from the provincial government, about 122.9 hectares, or 35% of regional and community parks in the qRD.

MoTI Permits: All the regional beach access trails, one regional park, Boot Point regional park, and the active transportation corridor across Myrtle Creek are located on Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure (MoTI) right-of-way land and are made possible through permits from the provincial government.

COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

Partnerships are integral to the provision of parks and trails throughout the region. Access to other parks and protected areas in the qRD have been made possible through partnerships with different governmental and non-governmental organizations, including local community organizations, and conservation organizations. Additionally, local community groups provide valuable services helping to maintain and provide trails and infrastructure to access alpine and backcountry areas in the region.

- **Land Trusts:** Some of the parkland and protected areas in the qRD have been established through partnerships with conservation organizations through land trusts. For example, the Conservation Area on Savary Island, purchased and managed by the Nature Trust of British Columbia, was made possible through fundraising and activism by local community groups, including Savary Island Land Trust (SILT) and the Friends of Savary Island.

- **Non-qRD Managed Lands:** There are trails and recreation areas managed by local community organizations, forest management companies, the province of British Columbia and Tla'amin First Nation on lands outside the qRD owned and managed parks system.

PHOTO CREDIT: SAVARY ISLAND LAND TRUST

PARKLAND AND TRAILS NEEDS ASSESSMENT

There is no definitive method for determining the right amount of parkland and trails for a regional district, as this depends on the values and needs of the community, the geographic context, and many other considerations. However, common metrics include comparisons to other jurisdictions, assessments of the amount of parkland per capita, and whether residents can easily access parks (detailed demographic information included in Section 3). The following section provides an analysis and discussion of these metrics and their utility in evaluating the qRD's parkland and trail supply.

Data on existing regional parks in the qRD was provided in Geographic Information System (GIS) format. Using GIS area calculations and population estimates from Statistics Canada, the current supply of regional parkland was determined for each of the electoral areas within the qRD. Overall, the qRD has a total of 330.8 hectares of regional parkland or 15.4 hectares of parkland per 1,000 residents.

TABLE 5. CURRENT AND PROJECTED PARKLAND SUPPLY NEEDS

qathet Regional District	Regional Population*	Parkland (ha) per 1,000 residents	Additional Parkland Required to Maintain Existing Service Levels
2021	21,496	15.4 ha	N/A
2031 (projected)	23,000	15 ha	21.3 ha
2041 (projected)	24,511	14 ha	45.4 ha

*Source: Statistics Canada 2021, and BCStats.

MAINTAINING THE CURRENT LEVEL OF SERVICE

Based on population projections, the qRD would need to add 21.3 hectares of parkland by 2031, and 45.4 hectares of parkland by 2041 to maintain current service levels. For reference, Haywire Bay regional park is approximately 33 hectares in size. It should be noted that while other parks and green spaces, such as provincial parks, reserves and land trusts, may address gaps in the parks and trails system, these lands have been excluded from the parkland for 1,000 residents calculations as they are not under the control of the qRD.

PARKLAND AND TRAIL DISTRIBUTION

As mentioned above, while population-based parkland supply and adequacy metrics are a useful tool, they alone cannot address all of the unique conditions, needs and goals of the qRD. While providing equitable access to parkland across the region is the aim of the qRD, constraints such as geography, availability of parkland for tenure, and jurisdictional considerations are important factors when considering the distribution of parks and beach access trails within the region.

COMPARISON OF OTHER REGIONAL DISTRICTS

While every region is unique in its geography, population, economy, values, and opportunities, comparisons offer useful reference points against which the qRD can measure its parkland provision and identify significant gaps. For this purpose, an average of regional parkland area was assembled from five other regional districts in British Columbia (see table below). Comparable regional districts were selected with similar characteristics such as low population density and both rural and urban populations.

Parkland supply metric calculations are developed for high level comparisons and are based on information from various available sources. This analysis provides a "snapshot" of current regional park supply by which the qRD can evaluate current and future levels of service.

While this benchmarking exercise provides a useful point of comparison, it should be recognized that many jurisdictions do not use these type of quantity standards because the facilities and quality of parks play an equal, if not more important, role in meeting community needs. The following chart shows a comparison of the amount of regional parkland provided in other Regional Districts. Of the Regional Districts listed below, parkland provision ranges from a low of 0.5 ha/1,000 residents up to a high of 36 ha/1,000 residents. The qRD is slightly below average for comparable communities.

TABLE 6. COMPARATIVE PARKLAND SUPPLY

Regional District	Population*	Total Area of Regional Parks (ha)	Parkland (ha) per 1,000 residents
Regional District of Nanaimo	170,367	2,787	16.3
Thompson-Nicola	132,663	67	0.5
Comox Valley	72,445	1155	15.9
Sunshine Coast	32,170	1,160	36
qathet Regional District	21,496	447	15.4
Average Amount of Regional Parkland per 1000 persons			**16.8**

3 COMMUNITY PROFILE

REGIONAL DEMOGRAPHICS

In 2021, the qRD had a population of 21,469, including the City of Powell River, according to Statistics Canada. The population increased by 7.1% between 2016 and 2021. Comparatively, the Province of British Columbia had a population change of 7.6% and Canada had a population change of 5.2%. Of the region's 11,921 private dwellings, 84% are occupied by permanent residents.

The qRD's land area is 5,067 km^2 and has a population density of 4.2 people per km^2. Of the region's land area, 3.47 km^2, or 0.068%, is regional and community parkland.

Five electoral areas and the City of Powell River participate in the Regional Parks Service. Each of these areas have different characteristics, demographics, population densities and amounts of parkland.

MAINTAINING THE STATUS QUO

The qRD is growing and, according to Statistics Canada, an additional 3,000 people are expected to call the region home by 2041.

With the current provision of regional parkland at 15.4 hectares per 1,000 people, the qRD would need to add approximately 21.3 hectares of parkland by 2031, and approximately 45.4 hectares of parkland by 2041 to maintain current service levels. By this measure, the qRD would need to acquire one park the size of Haywire Bay per decade.

Community Engagement

PURPOSE OF ENGAGEMENT

Community engagement was crucial to the development of this strategy and helped to determine the community's values and aspirations for parks and trails, including priorities for parkland investment. Community engagement identified key challenges and opportunities, and informed the development of the overall vision, goals and recommendations that will guide the long-term planning of the qRD's parks and trails system.

The first round of public engagement helped to gauge the community's perception and experience with existing regional parks and trails, note any barriers to access or enjoyment, and highlight aspirations for the future.

Input gathered from the online survey and open houses highlighted the following themes for the future of the qRD parks and trails system:

- **Equitable Resource Allocation**
- **Park Use and Amenities**
- **Parkland and Trail Supply**
- **Maintenance**
- **Accessibility**
- **Community Partnerships and Volunteer Opportunities**
- **Environmental Protection**

WHAT WE DID

ROUND 1:

- An online public survey, which attracted 370 participants between November 14 and 30.

- Four in-person open houses and two online open houses, with 99 participants overall.

- Email feedback from 17 community members.

ROUND 2:

The feedback from the initial round of engagement informed the draft report's Vision and Goals. In Round 2 of community engagement, which took place in May 2023, feedback was collected on the draft report. This phase of engagement included:

- An online public survey, which attracted 103 participants between May 16 and 30.

- Two online open houses, with 35 participants overall.

COMMUNITY PRIORITIES

During the first round of engagement, the top three priorities listed by online survey respondents were:

- Opportunities to connect with nature (87%).

- Protection for natural areas and sensitive ecosystems (75%).

- Opportunities to exercise and be active (63%).

The top three most valued features in regional parks by online survey respondents were:

- Hiking and walking trails (82%).

- Access to marine and lake shorelines (79%).

- Access to nature (77% of responses).

What We Heard

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT ROUND 1

The first round of community engagement took place in November 2022. Feedback from the first round of engagement was used to develop the draft vision, goals and recommendations.

WHAT WE DID

4 in-person workshops

2 online workshops

1 online survey from

Nov. 14-30, 2022

PARTICIPATION

370
online survey responses

99
participants in community open houses

17
community members provided email feedback

COMMUNITY VALUES

WATER ACCESS

Access to the waterfront, especially through public beach access trails.
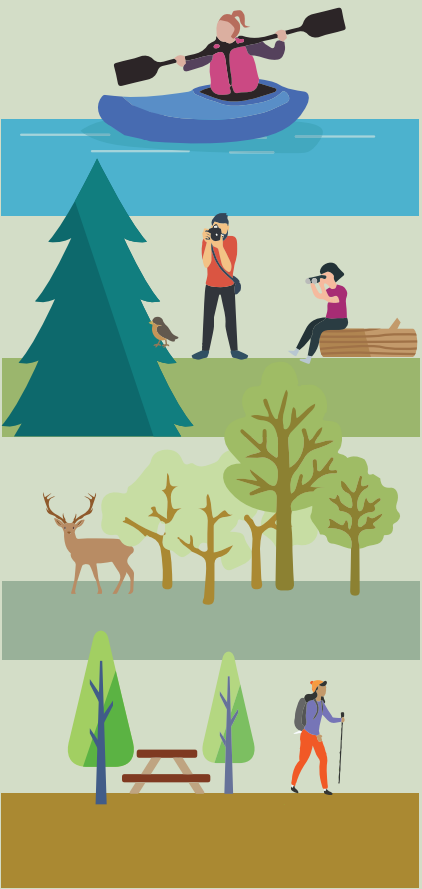
CONNECT TO NATURE

Importance of parks and trails for providing opportunities to connect with nature.

PROTECT NATURE

Protecting nature in regional parks and trails through conservation and by preserving biodiversity.

RECREATION

Importance of access to recreation opportunities such as walking, hiking, swimming, and picnicking.

KEY THEMES

DESIRE FOR NEW PARKS AND TRAILS

Open house attendees indicated that they are supportive of increasing funding for parks and trails and expanding the number of new parks and trails. Survey respondents were also slightly in favour of acquiring new parks over maintaining existing parks. Stillwater Bluffs was the top mentioned location for a new park or trail.

CONTINUED ACCESSIBILITY IMPROVEMENTS

There was strong support for improving accessibility for those with mobility challenges including additional washrooms, the accessibility and maintenance of trails, more accessible parking, and increased signage at parks and trails.

SAFE TRAIL CONNECTIONS & ACTIVE TRANSPORTATION

A key theme from the open houses was the desire for trail connections between communities and support for more opportunities for active transportation.

VOLUNTEER SUPPORT

The importance of volunteers for maintaining parks and trails within the qRD emerged as a key theme across the engagement process. There was also recognition of the need for the qRD to provide support to volunteers through funding.

What We Heard

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT ROUND 2

The second round of community engagement took place in May 2023 and included a second online survey and two virtual open houses. The Vision, Goals and Recommendations were updated following the second round of engagement to reflect feedback from the second round of engagement.

WHAT WE DID

2 online workshops

1 online survey from

May 16-30, 2023

PARTICIPATION

103*
online survey responses

15*
participants in community open houses

*Note: There were 370 online survey responses and 99 participants in the community open houses in the first round of engagement. It is common to see lower rates of participation in the second round of engagement as participants feel that they have voiced their feedback in the first round.

COMMUNITY VALUES

The community values from the first round of engagement remained relevant with the important addition of:

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

There was strong support for involving volunteer trail-building and maintenance groups, and groups centered around recreational activities like motor sports and horse-riding, in the future of parks and trails in the qRD.

ACCESSIBILITY

A desire for welcoming parks and trails system that prioritizes accessibility for those with mobility challenges, equitable access, and support for multiple types of trail usage.
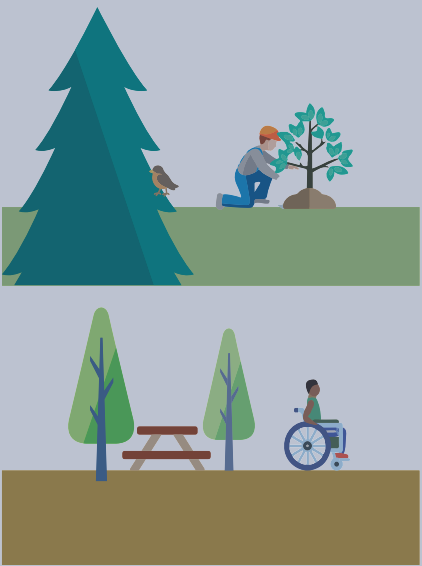
KEY THEMES

The following are the key issues and opportunities that emerged from the second round of engagement.

MORE FOCUS ON ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Survey respondents and open house attendees were very supportive of aspects of the Vision Statement and Goals that focused on the protection of ecologically sensitive areas.

COMMUNITY COLLABORATION

Many members of the public highlighted the vital work done historically and currently by volunteer groups and recreational groups to build trails. There was strong support for finding ways to collaborate with these groups for future trail building and maintenance activities.

ACCESSIBILITY AND SHARED USE

Accessibility remained a top concern, not only in building new trails and parks but as something to keep top-of-mind in maintaining and improving current trails and parks. To the qRD community, accessibility means access for those with mobility limitations, access to recreation for all people in all areas, and access for many types of recreational user groups.

FUTURE PRIORITIES

RESOURCE ALLOCATION

During community engagement, participants were asked about their priorities for funding new parkland versus providing improvements to existing parks. In general, online survey respondents supported a somewhat balanced approach. Of respondents, 29% were supportive of a 50/50 distribution between acquisitions and improvements.

However, of online survey respondents, there was slightly more support for expanding the number of parks and trails (63%) compared to improving existing parks and trails (60%) and many open house participants supported acquiring more parks and trails throughout the qRD.

Of open house participants, 84% indicated that they were strongly or somewhat in favour of increasing funding for regional parks.

It should be noted that online survey respondents from Savary Island, were outliers, and indicated a preference for improving existing parks and trails versus acquiring more.

This feedback was used to inform the development of the following goal, which was supported during the second round of engagement:

GOAL 3: *Strengthen community partnerships and volunteer resources*

PARKLAND AND TRAIL SUPPLY

According to online survey respondents, the number of parks and trails in the qRD is an issue that needs the most attention and improvement. Overall, nearly 34% of respondents were either somewhat or very dissatisfied with the number of parks and trails.

Levels of satisfaction were lowest amongst respondents from Texada (18% very dissatisfied, and 50% somewhat dissatisfied), Lasqueti Island (40% very dissatisfied, and 27% somewhat dissatisfied), and Savary Islands (33% very dissatisfied, and 0% somewhat dissatisfied).

When asked if anything limits their access to parks and trails, 40% of online survey respondents indicated that parks and trails were either too far to travel to, or not accessible by biking/walking.

This feedback was used to inform the development of the following goal, which was supported during the second round of engagement:

GOAL 1: *Identify, acquire, and manage new regional parks and trails*

NEW PARKS AND TRAILS

Location of new parks and trails

When asked where they would like to see new regional parks and trails, the most frequently mentioned locations by online survey respondents were:

- Stillwater Bluffs;

- More parks and beach access trails on Lasquesti Island;

- More beach access throughout the qRD in general;

- More parks and beach access trails on Texada Island, and

- More/improved active transportation networks connecting communities.

Types of new parks and trails

Participants indicated that they want to see the following types of parks and trails:

- Additional beach access trails. Participants at the Savary Island open house specifically requested that the Mermaid Trail beach access site at Henderson Road be maintained by the qRD as a designated beach access trail.

- Develop a continuous multi-use trail and active transportation corridor and improved infrastructure (i.e. bridges). This was the most requested improvement by participants at the Powell River open house.

- Additional parkland across the qRD in general.

This feedback was used to inform the development of the following goals, which was supported during the second round of engagement:

GOAL 1: *Identify, acquire, and manage new regional parks and trails*

GOAL 5: *Support active transportation and a connected community*

PARK USE AND AMENITIES

The most popular outdoor activities for online survey respondents included walking and hiking (91%), swimming (81%), and picnicking/relaxing outside (71%), kayaking/canoeing/stand-up paddleboarding, (65%), and birdwatching/wildlife viewing (61%).

The top five features that online survey respondents value in parks included hiking and walking trails (82%), access to marine and lake shorelines (79%), access to nature (77%), viewpoints/viewing areas (43%), and washrooms (34%).

Online survey respondents were mostly satisfied with the variety of parks and activities available to them in the qRD (21% very satisfied, 35% somewhat satisfied), and with the variety of amenities in parks (16% very satisfied, and 32% somewhat satisfied).

However, online survey respondents from Savary Island were mostly dissatisfied with the variety of amenities in parks (40% very dissatisfied, 20% somewhat dissatisfied), as well as respondents from Lasqueti Island (19% very dissatisfied, 17% somewhat dissatisfied).

When asked how existing parks and trails could be improved, open house participants indicated that they would like to see more signage, including directional trail signage, and trail etiquette signage, and washrooms at parks.

This feedback was used to inform the development of the following goal, which was supported during the second round of engagement:

GOAL 4: *Enhance the user experience at parks and beach access trails*

PARK MAINTENANCE

Open house participants indicated that having well-maintained parks and trails was a key priority for their vision for the future parks system. Overall, online survey respondents indicated that they were satisfied with the maintenance of parks and trails (28% very satisfied, 38% somewhat satisfied).
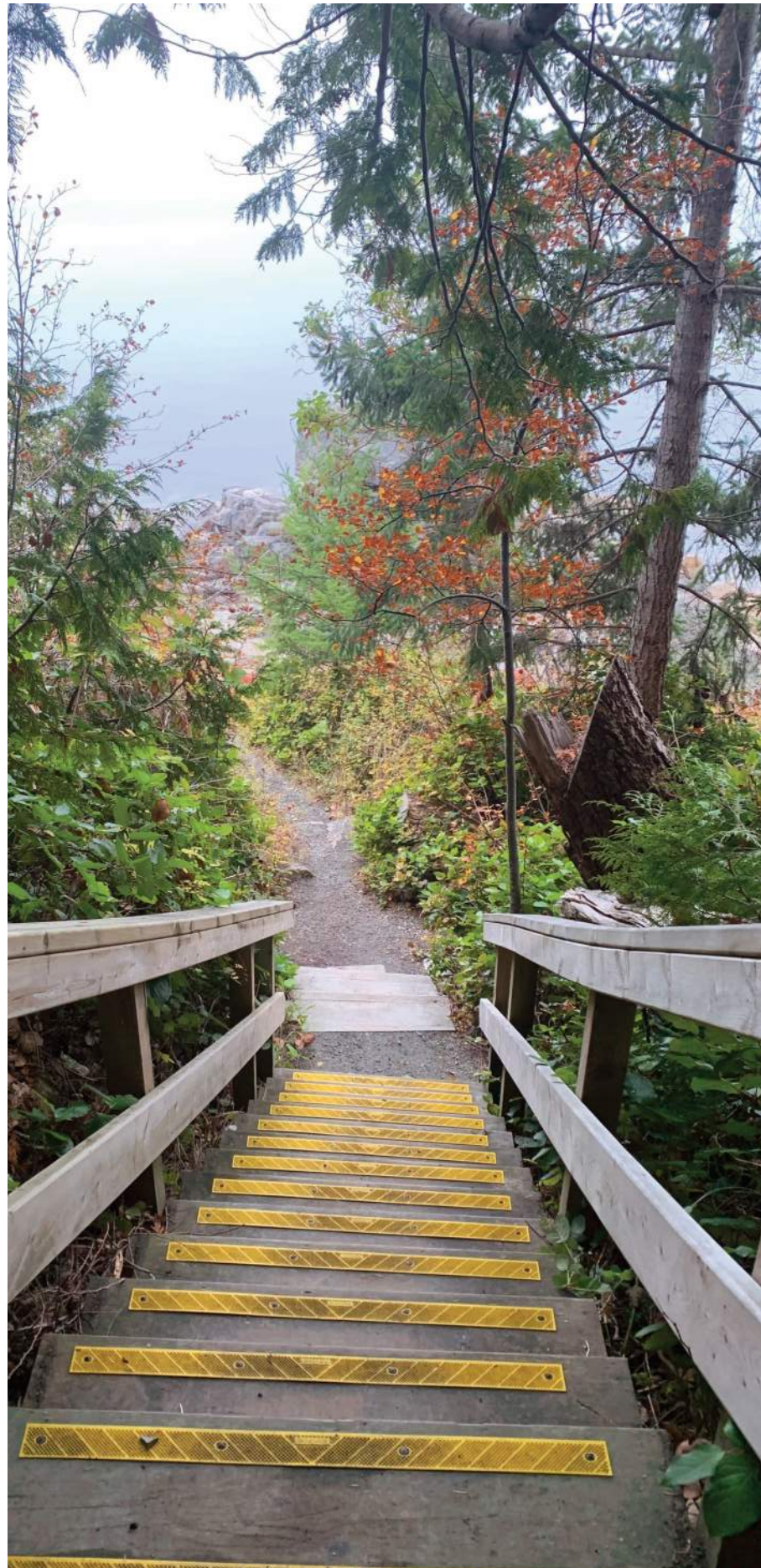
When asked how existing parks and trails could be improved, open house participants indicated that they would like to see some additional maintenance. Increased maintenance and accessibility improvements at beach access sites was one of the top priorities for participants at the Savary Island open house.

This feedback was used to inform the development of the following goal, which was supported during the second round of engagement:

GOAL 4: *Enhance the user experience at parks and beach access trails*

MOBILITY AND ACCESSIBILITY BARRIERS

When asked about accessibility, online survey respondents were mostly satisfied with the physical accessibility at parks and trails (26% very satisfied, 38% somewhat satisfied), and mostly satisfied with the ease of access getting to parks and trails (40% very satisfied, and 38% somewhat satisfied).

When asked if anything limits access to parks and trails, 6% of online survey respondents selected mobility barriers. However, open house participants indicated that having inclusive and accessible parks and trails was a key priority for their vision for the future parks system.

When asked what improvements should be prioritized to make parks and trails more accessible and barrier free, online survey respondents indicated that they would like to see:

- More washrooms at parks and at trailheads (24%);

- Improved parks and trails for people with mobility issues (18%);

- More accessible parking (11%);

- More beach access trails/accessible beach access trails (8%), and

- More signage at parks and at trail accesses (7%).

This feedback was used to inform the development of the following goal, which was supported during the second round of engagement:

GOAL 4: *Enhance the user experience at parks and beach access trails*

COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS AND VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

The first round of engagement indicated that community groups provide essential infrastructure, maintenance, and access to recreation opportunities throughout the qRD. The overall sentiment was that the contributions from community groups are highly valued, and more could be done to support them, build on existing relationships and facilitate additional volunteer opportunities.

Many of the comments from participants at the open houses speak to the need for the qRD to provide additional support to volunteer groups, and more facilitation of community initiatives, including parks and trails maintenance, community events, programming and communal resources in parks.

Open house participants also emphasized maintaining and fostering relationships with landowners, governments, First Nations, and non-profit agencies for continued and additional access to land for recreational and conservation purposes, and for parks and trails partnerships.

This feedback was used to inform the development of the following goal, which was supported during the second round of engagement:

GOAL 3: *Strengthen community partnerships and volunteer resources*

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

The first round of engagement indicated that the community highly values access to nature and preserving natural places. Online survey respondents indicated that opportunities to connect with nature (87%), and the protection of natural areas and sensitive ecosystems (75%) were the most valued aspects of the parks and trails system.

Most open house participants were supportive of acquiring more parks and trails throughout the qRD and there was preference for focusing on conservation and preservation of natural areas rather than having parks for active recreation.

Additionally, many of the comments from participants at the open houses indicated support for protecting land with sensitive ecosystems and mature forests. Stillwater Bluffs was specifically identified by the community as the top priority for acquisition as a regional park and was highly valued for its ecological significance and unique natural features.

This feedback was used to inform the development of the following goal, which was supported during the second round of engagement:

GOAL 2: *Strengthen community partnerships and volunteer resources*

ELECTORAL AREA A

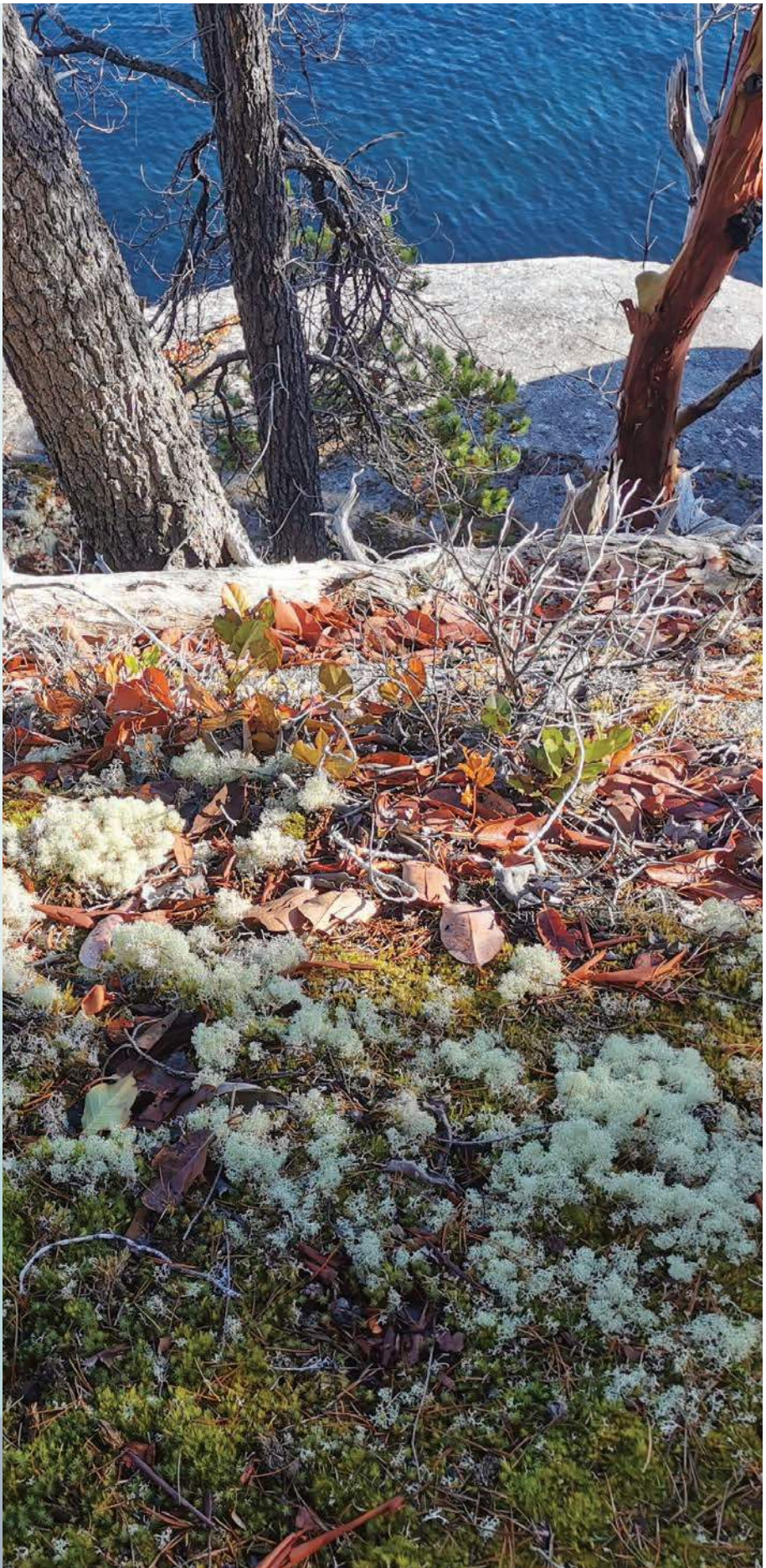TLA'AMIN LANDS

ELECTORAL AREA C

CITY OF POWELL RIVER

ELECTORAL AREA B

ELECTORAL AREA D
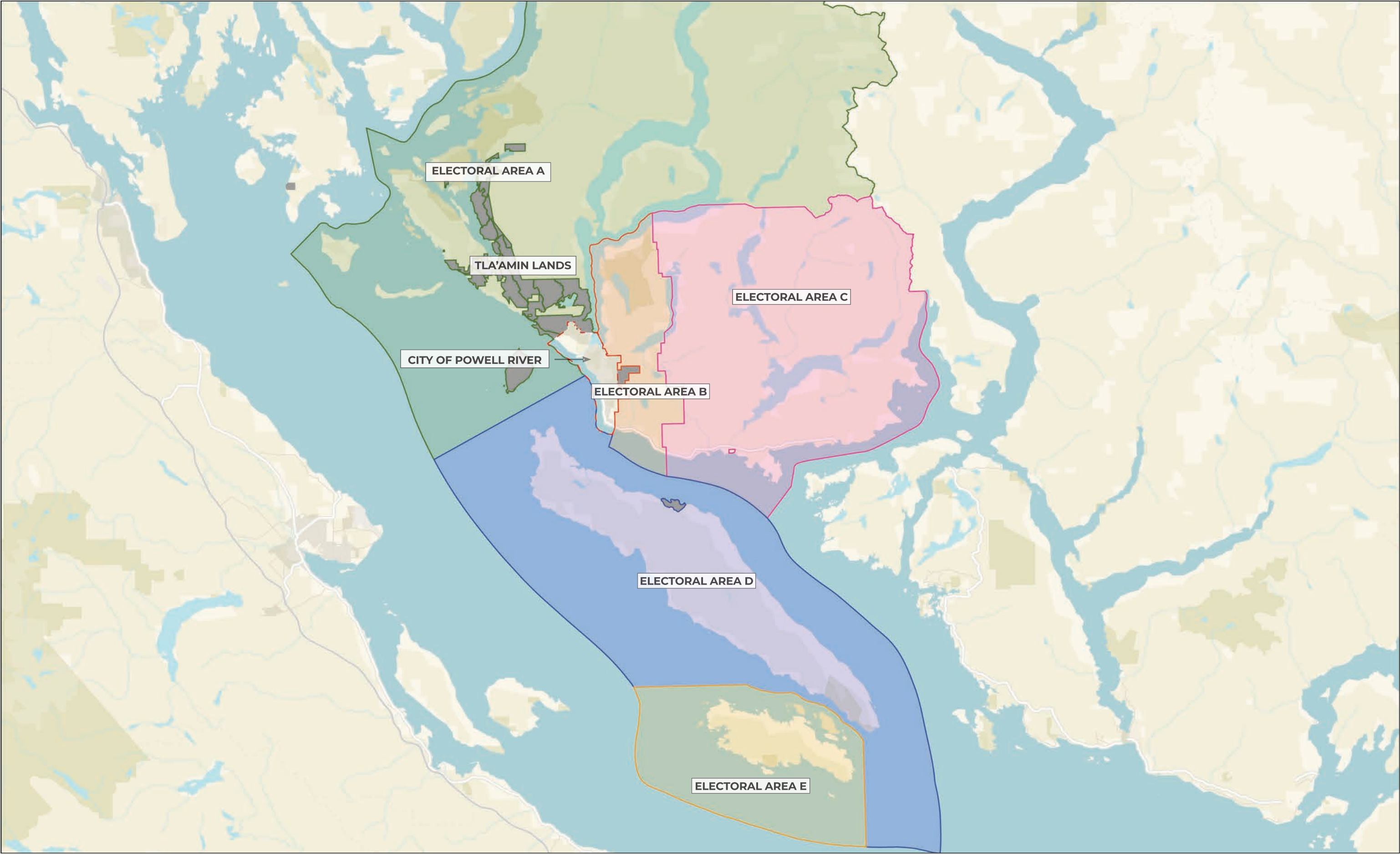
ELECTORAL AREA E

Community Needs Assessment

ELECTORAL AREA PROFILES

The following table summarizes the different characteristics, demographics, population densities and amounts of parkland in each electoral area and the City of Powell River. The electoral areas with less parkland per 1000 residents than the qRD average of 15.4 are highlighted in orange.

TABLE 7. COMPARISON OF PARKLAND SUPPLY BY ELECTORAL AREA

qRD Electoral Area	Population*	Population Density (per km²)	Percent of Total qRD Population	Total Amount of Regional Parkland	Total Amount of Community Parkland	qRD managed Parkland Per 1000 residents	Other parkland and protected areas**
qathet Regional District	21,496	4.2	100%	330.8 ha	19.5 ha	15.4 ha	17,210 ha
Electoral Area A	1,250	0.3	5.8%	19.03 ha	-	15.2 ha	9,268 ha
Electoral Area B	1,664	12.9	7.7%	76.62 ha	-	46 ha	3,300 ha
Electoral Area C	2,197	3.4	10.2%	10.16 ha	-	4.62 ha	286 ha
Electoral Area D (Texada)	1,126	3.8	5.2%	224.6 ha	19.5 ha	213.6 ha	1,130 ha
Electoral Area E (Lasqueti Island)	498	6.8	2.3%	0.3 ha	-	6.8 ha	3,126 ha
City of Powell River	13,943	482.4	64.9%	-	-	-	164 ha

*Source: Statistics Canada 2021, and BCStats.

** Other parkland and protected areas include lands not owned or managed by the qRD including provincial parks, City of Powell River parks, land trusts, and conservation reserves.

Note: While residents of Tla'amin Nation and Sechelt Indian Government District account for 4% of qRD's population and may access parks and trails within the qRD, these Nations do not participate in the parks and trails service.

TABLE 8. COMPARISON OF BEACH ACCESS TRAIL SUPPLY BY ELECTORAL AREA

qRD Electoral Area	Population*	Population Density (per km²)	Percent of Total qRD Population	Total Number of qRD Beach Access Trails	Total Number of City Beach Access Trails
qathet Regional District	21,496	4.2	100%	22	12
Electoral Area A	1,250	0.3	5.8%	6	-
Electoral Area B	1,664	12.9	7.7%	4	-
Electoral Area C	2,197	3.4	10.2%	8	-
Electoral Area D (Texada)	1,126	3.8	5.2%	4	-
Electoral Area E (Lasqueti Island)	498	6.8	2.3%	-	-
City of Powell River	13,943	482.4	64.9%	-	12

*Source: Statistics Canada 2021, and BC Stats.

Note: While residents of Tla'amin Nation and Sechelt Indian Government District account for 4% of qRD's population and may access parks and trails within the qRD, these Nations do not participate in the parks and trails service.

Legend

- Electoral Area A
- qRD Regional Parks
- Sunshine Coast Trail
- Tla'amin Lands
- Engagement – Community Areas of Interest for Acquisition
- Existing Beach Access Trails
- Savary Island Land Trust
- Provincial Parks
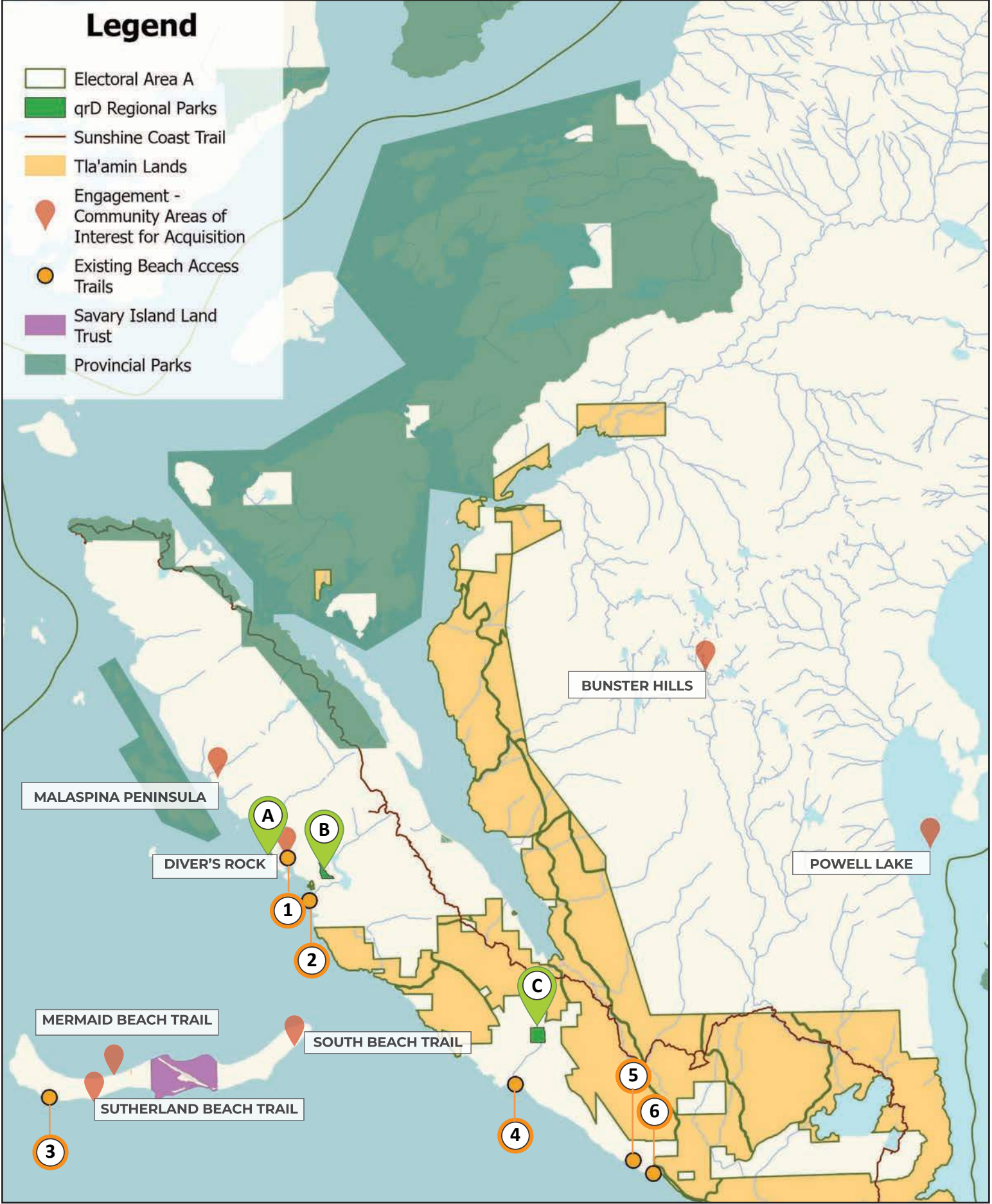
REGIONAL PARKS

- **A** Diver's Rock Regional Park
- **B** Klah Ah Men Lund Gazebo Regional Park
- **C** Craig Regional Park

BEACH ACCESS TRAILS

- **1** Finn Bay Road
- **2** Long Acre Road
- **3** Julian Road
- **4** Emmonds Road
- **5** Sturt Beach
- **6** Southview Road

ELECTORAL AREA A

Electoral Area A covers the area northwest of the City of Powell River boundary to Desolation Sound, and includes the Malaspina Peninsula, the community of Lund and Savary and Hernando Islands. Tla'amin Nation lands are excluded.

Electoral Area A accounts for most of the land area in the qRD and has the lowest population density of all the electoral areas. Electoral Area A has a similar amount of regional parkland per 1,000 residents as the qRD overall, about 6% of the qRD's population and parkland. Savary Island residents account for close to 0.5% of the total qRD population. Electoral Area A has the most provincial parkland and protected areas in the qRD.

What We Heard About Area A

When asked how parks and trails could be improved in Area A, participants at the north of town open house emphasized community driven amenities and local events in parks. Attendees at the Savary Island open house expressed the importance of public beach access and support from the qRD in stabilizing shorelines and providing safe beach access in steep locations. Attendees at the Savary Island open house placed emphasis on adding a public washroom on Savary Island and adding a beach access trail at Mermaid Beach.

When asked where the community would like to see new parks and trails in Electoral Area A, the top responses were:

- Malaspina Peninsula
- Area surrounding Diver's Rock
- Bunster Hills
- Powell Lake
- More beach access
- Improve access to beaches (including at South Beach, Sutherland Beach and Mermaid Beach)

Gap Analysis

Residents in Electoral Area A have good access to regional and provincial parkland; however, this area has lower than the qRD average for beach access trails and engagement feedback confirms that beach access, particularly on Savary island, is a gap.
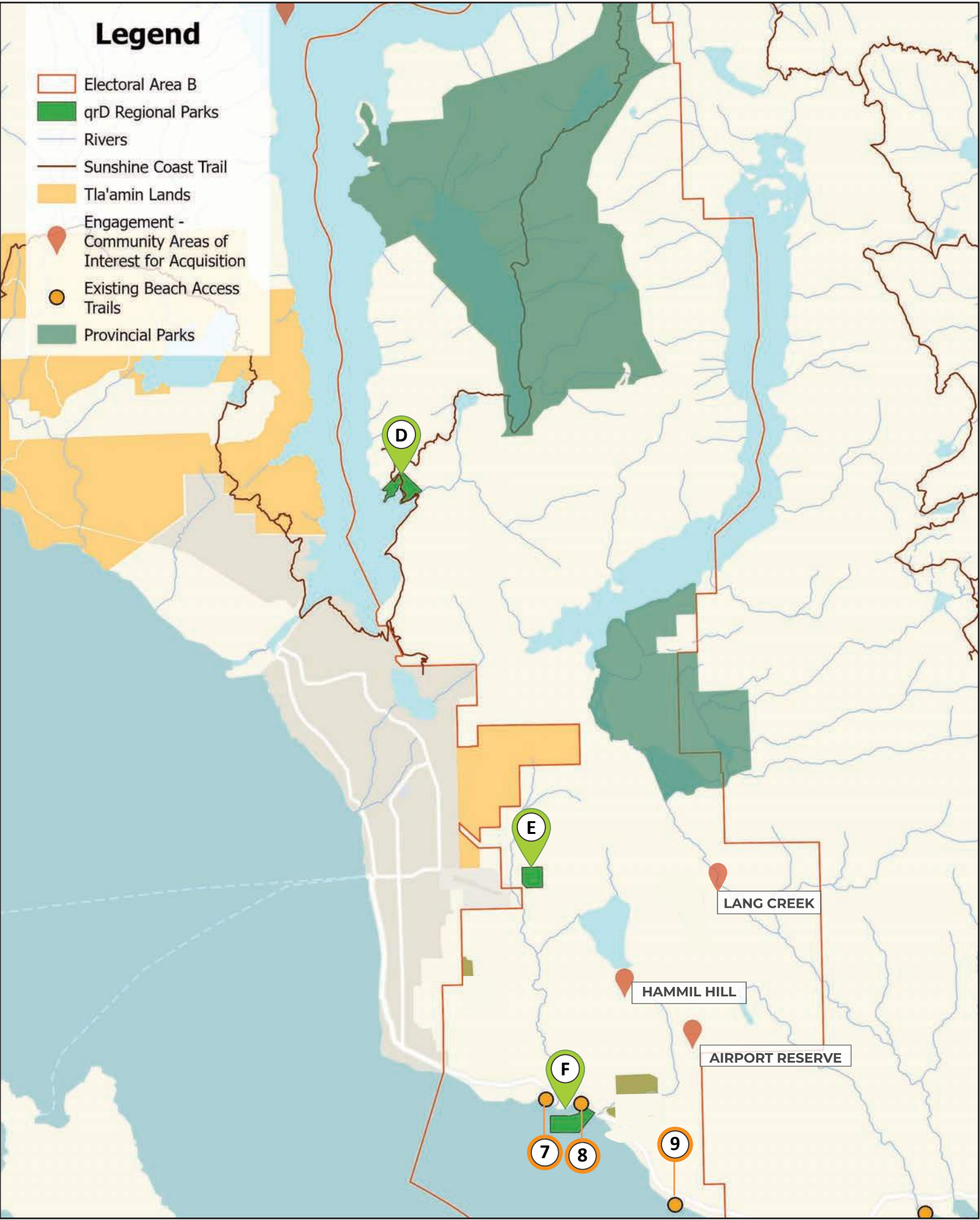
REGIONAL PARKS

(D) Haywire Bay Regional Park

(E) Paradise Exhibition Park

(F) Myrtle Rocks Regional Park

BEACH ACCESS TRAILS

(7) Pebble Beach Road

(8) Myrtle Rocks

(9) Armour Road

Legend

- ☐ Electoral Area B
- ▪ qrD Regional Parks
- ～ Rivers
- — Sunshine Coast Trail
- ▪ Tla'amin Lands
- 📍 Engagement - Community Areas of Interest for Acquisition
- 🔘 Existing Beach Access Trails
- ▪ Provincial Parks

ELECTORAL AREA B

Electoral Area B covers the area southeast of the City of Powell River boundary to Whalen Road and includes Paradise Valley and properties outside Powell River on Nootka, Covey and Tanner Streets. Tla'amin Nation lands are excluded.

Electoral Area B has the highest population density in the qRD, excluding Powell River. It also has the second highest amount of regional and provincial parkland in the qRD and the second highest amount of parkland per 1,000 residents, with close to 23% of regional parkland. The three regional beach access trails in this area are located to the south of Powell River.

What We Heard About Area B

When asked how parks and trails could be improved in Area B, participants at the south of town open house expressed the importance of having a variety of multi-use parks and trails, expanding active transportation infrastructure, and increasing access to beaches. There was also support for a disc golf course near Myrtle Point from participants at the south of town workshop.

When asked where the community would like to see new parks and trails in Electoral Area B, the top responses were:

- Hammil Hill*
- Lang Creek*
- Airport Reserve*
- Multi-use trails along the highway
- More campgrounds for horses

Gap Analysis

While Electoral Area B has significantly more regional and provincial parkland than the Regional District as a whole, engagement feedback and mapping indicate that increasing access to the water and a dedicated active transportation corridor along the highway would be beneficial in this area.

*Potential future community parks.

REGIONAL PARKS

G Rossander Regional Park

H Palm Beach Regional Park

BEACH ACCESS TRAILS

10 Broom Road

11 Patrick Road

12 Cove Road (look out)

13 Mahood Road

14 Phillips Road

15 Hollingsworth Road

16 Osprey Road

17 Canoe Bay

18

MAHOOD'S BEACH

EAGLE RIVER

STILLWATER BLUFFS

Legend

- Electoral Area C
- qrD Regional Parks
- Rivers
- Sunshine Coast Trail
- Tla'amin Lands
- Engagement - Community Areas of Interest for Acquisition
- Existing Beach Access Trails
- Provincial Parks

ELECTORAL AREA C

Electoral Area C has the highest population in the qRD, excluding the City of Powell River, and has the second lowest population density. About 10% of the qRD's population lives in Electoral Area C. Electoral Area C has the second lowest amount of regional and least amount of provincial parkland in the qRD, excluding Powell River, which has none. Of the qRD's 22 beach access trails, nine are in Electoral Area C (41%).

What We Heard About Area C

When asked how parks and trails could be improved in Area C, there was significant support for improving safety and accessibility for cyclists along the highway. There was also strong support for acquiring Stillwater Bluffs as a park from participants at all of the open houses. There were also suggestions to improve amenities in parks and trails to better serve the equestrian community.

When asked where the community would like to see new parks and trails in Electoral Area C, the top responses were:

- Stillwater Bluffs
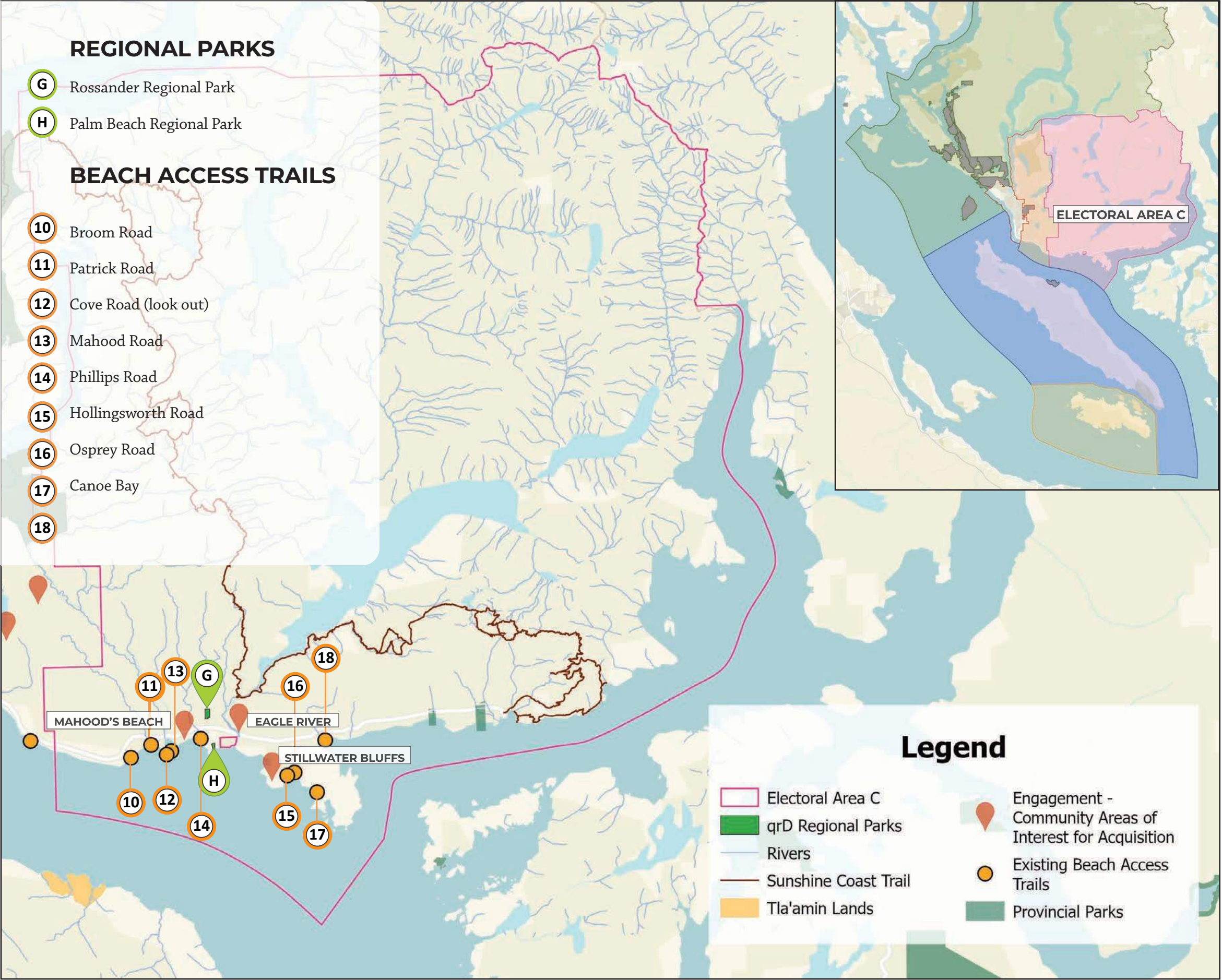- Mahood Beach
- Eagle River

Gap Analysis

With the second highest population in the qRD behind Powell River and the second lowest amount of regional and community parkland, an additional 25 hectares of parkland is needed in Area C to meet the current regional level of service of 15.4 hectares per 1000.

Legend

- Electoral Area D
- qrD Regional Parks
- qrD Community Parks
- Rivers
- Sunshine Coast Trail
- Tla'amin Lands
- Engagement - Community Areas of Interest for Acquisition
- Provincial Parks

VAN ANDA

EMILY LAKE

VAN ANDA

COMMUNITY PARKS

EMILY LAKE

SHELTER POINT

DAVIE BAY

COMMUNITY PARKS

GILLES BAY BEACH ACCESSES

GILLES BAY

ELECTORAL AREA D (TEXADA)

Electoral Area D covers all Texada Island and includes the communities of Van Anda and Gillies Bay. Tla'amin Nation lands are excluded. Electoral Area D has the highest amount of regional parkland in the qRD.

Texada Island has the largest regional park, Shelter Point Regional Park, several community parks and four beach access trails. Additionally there are three informal beach access points in Van Anda at Erickson Beach, Marble Bluffs Park, and the Van Anda Dock.

What We Heard About Area D

When asked how parks and trails could be improved in Area D, participants at the Texada Island open house voiced their desire for more beach access trails and a dog park. Other suggestions included improving access to Sanderson Trail for those with mobility issues, more seating along trails and more signage and parking at regional parks and beach access trails.
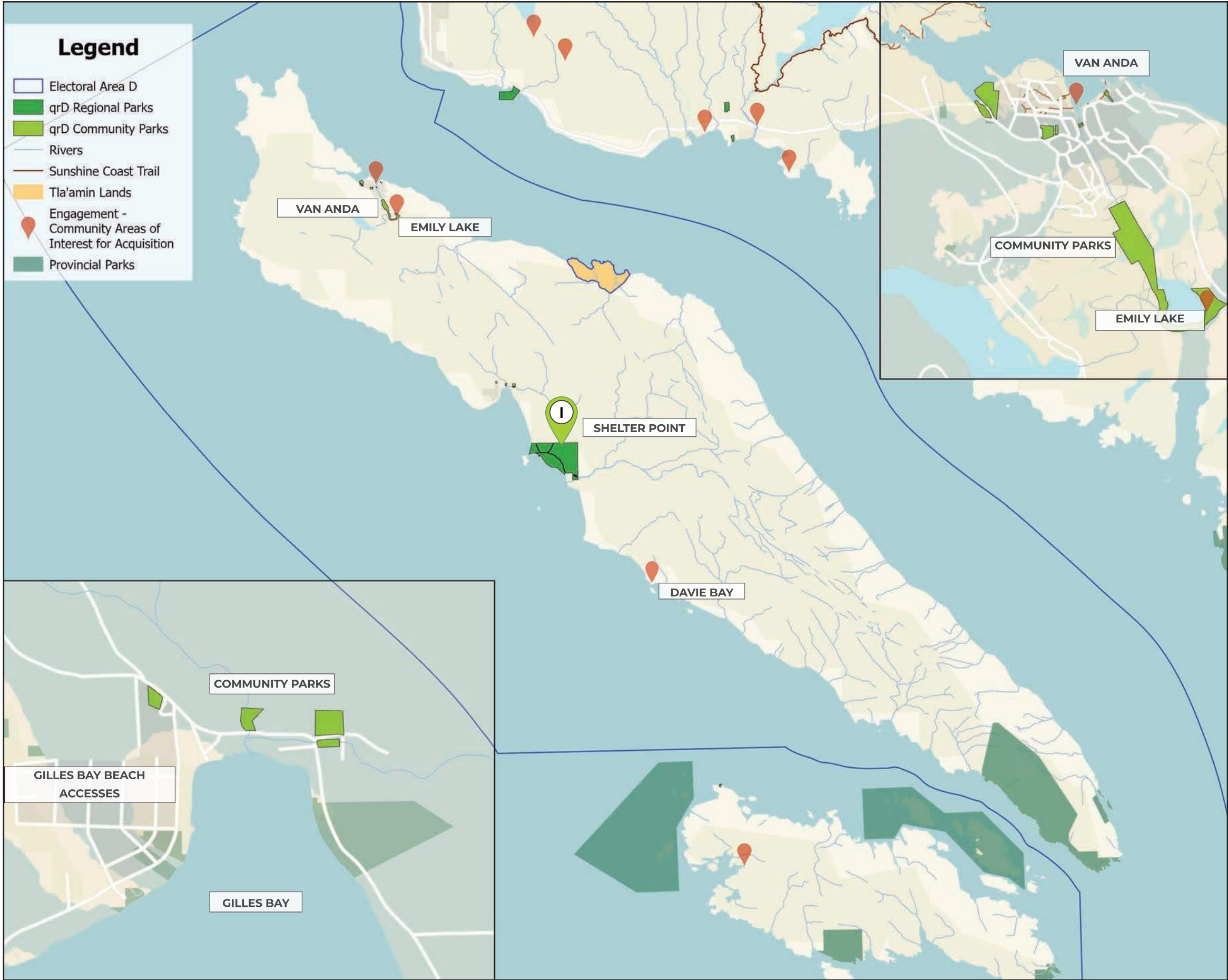
When asked where the community would like to see new parks and trails in Electoral Area D, the top responses were:

- Davie Bay
- Van Anda
- Emily Lake
- Pipeline Beach
- Waterfront Trail

Gap Analysis

While Electoral Area D has significantly more regional and community parkland than the qRD as a whole, engagement feedback and mapping indicate that increasing access to the water and improving existing parks and trails through accessibility upgrades and signage would be beneficial for the community.

ELECTORAL AREA E

ELECTORAL AREA E

ELECTORAL AREA E (LASQUETI)

Electoral Area E covers all Lasqueti Island and some small surrounding islands. Electoral Area E has the lowest amount of regional parkland in the qRD. The area only has one regional park, the smallest in the qRD, and does not have any beach access trails.

What We Heard About Area E

When asked how parks and trails could be improved in Area E, those at the Lasqueti Island open house placed significant emphasis on public beach access and adding additional parks and trails on the island. There were also suggestions to add more amenities, like picnic tables and washrooms at Boot Point and Spring Bay, and signage for beach access trails.

When asked where the community would like to see new parks and trails in Electoral Area E, the top responses were:

- A multi-use trail the length of Lasqueti Island
- A waterfront park
- Beach access trails on MoTI land

Gap Analysis

Boot Point Regional Park is the only regional park on Lasqueti Island and accounts for about 0.1% of the region's total parkland while Lasqueti makes up 2.3% of the region's population. An additional 8 hectares of parkland is needed in Electoral Area E to meet the current regional level of service of 15.4 hectares per 1000. This area has lower than the Regional District average for beach access trails and engagement feedback confirms that beach access also is a gap.

Legend

☐ Electoral Area E	📍 Engagement - Community Areas of Interest for Acquisition
▇ qrD Regional Parks	
— Rivers	▇ Provincial Parks
— Sunshine Coast Trail	

BOOT POINT

WATERFRONT PARK

CITY OF POWELL
RIVER

Legend

- - - Powell River Municipal
Boundary
▇ qrD Regional Parks
— Rivers
— Sunshine Coast Trail
▇ Tla'amin Lands
📍 Engagement -
Community Areas of
Interest for Acquisition
▇ City of Powell River
Parks
▇ Provincial Parks

BETWEEN POWELL LAKE AND
CRANBERRY LAKE

CITY OF POWELL RIVER

City of Powell River covers 17.31 square kilometers and includes the communities of Westview, Cranberry, Wildwood and the original Townsite. While the City of Powell River does not have any regional parks or regional beach access trails, the City has 164 hectares of parks.

What We Heard About Powell River

When asked how parks and trails could be improved in City of Powell River, participants at the Powell River open house were in support of better trail connections to downtown/other communities, increasing parking at beach access trails and providing larger parking areas for horse trailers.

When asked where the community would like to see new parks and trails in Powell River, the top responses were:

- Active transportation connections between regional parks and beach access trails
- Between Powell Lake and Cranberry Lake

Gap Analysis

Community feedback suggests that better connections to regional parks, beach access trails, and other communities is a gap in this area. While there are no regional parks or regional beach access trails in Powell River, according to the City of Powell River's Parks and Trails Master Plan, the City has 10.6 hectares of parkland per 1000 people and 7 developed beach accesses including Willingdon Beach and Mowat Bay.

4 VISION AND GOALS

The Vision provides a unified approach for the qRD's parks and trails system and reflects what we heard from stakeholders and the public during the first round of engagement.

The parks and trails system preserves and enhances natural spaces, connects people to the waterfront, rich and biodiverse ecosystems such as forests and beaches, and each other. Supported by community partnerships, regional parks and trails provide diverse, accessible, and safe opportunities for relaxation and recreation that support health and wellness for all and a resilient environment for future generations.

GOALS

Five goals emerged to support the qRD in achieving the vision for parks and trails. Each goal is supported by specific recommendations to be accomplished over the next 10 years.

Goal 1: Identify, acquire, and manage new regional parks and trails.

Goal 2: Increase protection and management of natural areas.

Goal 3: Strengthen community partnerships and volunteer resources.

Goal 4: Enhance the user experience at parks and beach access trails.

Goal 5: Support active transportation and a connected community.

Goal 1

Identify, acquire, and manage new regional parks and trails

RECOMMENDATION 1.1

Set a target to acquire an additional 21.3 hectares of parkland to maintain the current level of service for parks and trails as the population increases.

RECOMMENDATION 1.2

Adopt a Parkland Acquisition Policy (Appendix C) to guide decisions on acquisition of regionally significant parkland.

Prioritize the acquisition of:

- Sites with unique/significant landscape features
- Sites with sensitive ecosystems/high levels of biodiversity
- Sites that contain species at risk
- Sites that have key habitats/wildlife corridors
- Sites with high cultural, historic, or heritage value
- Sites that are connected to other parks and trails
- Sites with high education/research value
- Sites that are accessible
- Sites that are complementary to the parks system
- Sites in areas with little existing parkland
- Sites that are highly valued by the community
- Sites that are in threat from development
- Sites with partnership opportunities with other qRD planning and conservation initiatives
- Sites that are available for acquisition
- Sites that can be reasonably managed by the qRD
- Larger sites
- Sites that have high climate change mitigation potential
- Sites that are complementary to planning initiatives

RECOMMENDATION 1.3

Increase public access to the waterfront by acquiring and developing additional beach access trails.

Prioritize the acquisition of beach access trails:

- In sites where waterfront access is limited
- To sites that are well-used
- To sites with high recreational value
- To sites with high wildlife viewing potential
- That could reasonably be maintained by the qRD
- That could easily be made accessible
- That could accommodate support amenities such as parking or washrooms
- On right-of-ways with good roads, no gates or development

Goal 2

Increase protection and management of natural areas

RECOMMENDATION 2.1

Create park management plans to determine the type, location, uses, and activities appropriate within regional parks to protect important habitat and ecosystems, and cultural features. Review existing ecological data and sensitive ecosystem inventories and determine if additional information or studies are needed to identify natural areas to be protected in each regional park. Consider working with organizations like the Coastal Partners in Conservation Society to carry out inventories and field studies.

RECOMMENDATION 2.2

Collaborate with community groups and environmental organizations, agencies, and land managers to support the restoration and enhancement of fragmented habitats and ecosystems within regional parks. Currently, volunteers help with ecological restoration, invasive plant removal, trail maintenance, and garbage clean-ups. Organizations like the Coastal Partners in Conservation Society could also support habitat restoration projects.
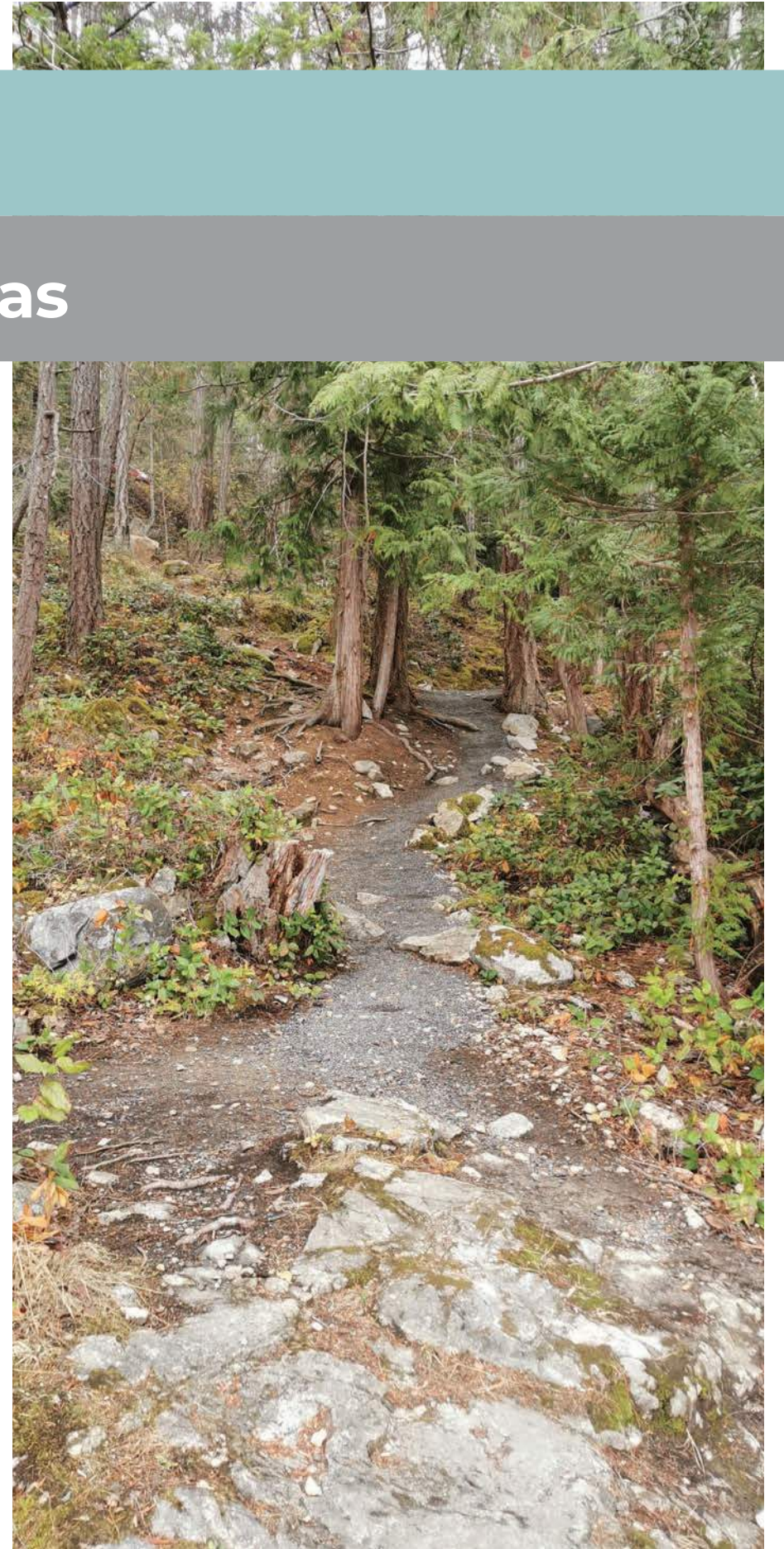
Goal 3

Strengthen community partnerships and volunteer resources

RECOMMENDATION 3.1

Continue to work with First Nations communities, other levels of government, community groups, non-profit agencies, private landowners, land trusts, and Crown land tenure holders to maintain and expand land use agreements and acquire additional parkland for recreation and conservation.

RECOMMENDATION 3.2

Continue to develop the Parks, Properties and Trails Volunteer program to increase volunteering opportunities and support community organizations in assisting and contributing to regional parks, properties, and trails projects including ecological restoration, trail maintenance. Explore opportunities to increase awareness of the program and reduce barriers to participation.

RECOMMENDATION 3.3

Collaborate with Tla'amin, shíshálh, Klahoose, Nanoose, Homalco, K'ómoks and other Coast Salish First Nations to incorporate cultural information at regional parks and explore opportunities to protect culturally significant sites and incorporate traditional knowledge.

RECOMMENDATION 3.4

Support community groups in their efforts to seek authorization for backcountry trails on Provincial land and acknowledge the work of volunteer groups in maintaining trails and managing invasive species on non-qRD owned lands.

Goal 4

Enhance the user experience at parks and beach access trails

RECOMMENDATION 4.1

Develop a monitoring system to understand current levels of service and determine emerging needs. This will ensure parks and beach access trails are safe, well-maintained, and that appropriate resources and budget are allocated to maintenance.

RECOMMENDATION 4.2

Assess regional parks to identify barriers to access and opportunities to provide improved accessibility for all ages and abilities. Ensure parking lots, washrooms, and at least a portion of each picnic area in regional parks is fully accessible. Aim to provide at least one pathway or trail that is accessible at each regional park.

RECOMMENDATION 4.3

Provide clear accessibility information on the qRD's website, park webpages, and at trailheads. An online resource or informational pamphlet could be created to identify barrier-free amenities and access points across the qRD.

RECOMMENDATION 4.4

Ensure all regional parks and beach access trails are identified with signage. Popular trails in the region should have signage indicating land ownership and trail etiquette and wildlife to ensure the safety of users. Consider adding educational information to signage with information about the site's historical, cultural or ecological importance.

RECOMMENDATION 4.5

Identify opportunities to incorporate more support amenities such as washrooms, signage, playground equipment and parking at select regional parks and beach access trails. Prioritize adding amenities to parks in underserved areas identified through the gap analysis.

Goal 5

Support active transportation and a connected community

RECOMMENDATION 5.1

Determine the feasibility of creating regional active transportation corridors to connect regional parks and communities.

Active transportation corridors should be

- Safe for multiple modes of transportation types (biking, walking, horseback riding);
- In areas with a large enough population to support high use;
- Connected with regional parks and trail systems; and
- Supported by Indigenous communities.

RECOMMENDATION 5.2

Coordinate with other jurisdictions, First Nations, land managers, and landowners to identify partnership opportunities for active transportation initiatives.

RECOMMENDATION 5.3

Develop an active transportation corridor implementation plan that identifies:

- Priority ratings;
- Estimated costs;
- Jurisdictional/land ownership concerns;
- Grant and other funding opportunities; and/or
- Design considerations/standards.

5 IMPLEMENTATION

This plan provides recommendations for improvements to the qRD's parks and trails system over a 10 year period from 2024-2033. This section includes priorities and timelines for the recommended actions. This implementation plan is intended as a guide.

The following implementation table summarizes the recommendations and indicates a timeline for completion (immediate, short, medium or long term). A high-level budget estimate, including the anticipated external and/or staff cost for each recommendation, is also indicated in the table. Operational items are identified as those that should be addressed through staff work plans and internal resources. Capital projects are those that will be evaluated and incorporated into budget planning for approval by the Board through the capital planning process based on priorities and as resources allow.

The qRD should plan to update the Parks and Trails Strategy following the 10 year planning period to reflect the desires and aspirations of the qRD community at that time.

GOALS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Five goals emerged to support the qRD in achieving its vision for parks and trails. Each goal is supported by specific actions to be accomplished over the next 10 years.

Recommendation	Description	Time-frame Immediate: as soon as possible; Short: 0-3 yrs); Medium (3-10 yrs) or Long Term (10+ yrs)	Responsibility	Resource (Operational/ Staff Time)
Goal 1: Identify, acquire, and manage new regional parks and trails.				
Recommendation 1.1	Set a target to acquire an additional 21.3 hectares of parkland to maintain the current level of service for parks and trails as the population increases.	Immediate	In-house	Staff Time
Recommendation 1.2	Adopt a Parkland Acquisition Policy to guide decisions on acquisition of regionally significant parkland.	Short	In-house	Staff Time
Recommendation 1.3	Increase public access to the waterfront by acquiring and developing additional beach access trails.	Medium	In-house	Staff time to acquire permits. Development and maintenance costs will vary depending on environmental conditions.
Goal 2: Increase protection and management of natural areas.				
Recommendation 2.1	Create park management plans to determine the type, location, uses, and activities appropriate within regional parks to protect important habitat and ecosystems, and cultural features.	Medium	Consultant	$20,000-40,000 per park depending on size and complexity of the park
Recommendation 2.2	Collaborate with community groups and environmental organizations, agencies, and land managers to support the restoration and enhancement of fragmented habitats and ecosystems within regional parks.	Short	In-house	Staff Time
Goal 3: Strengthen community partnerships and volunteer resources.				
Recommendation 3.1	Continue to work with First Nations communities, other levels of government, community groups, non-profit agencies, private landowners, land trusts, and Crown land tenure holders to maintain and expand land use agreements and acquire additional parkland for recreation and conservation.	Immediate, on-going	In-house	Staff Time
Recommendation 3.2	Continue to develop the Parks, Properties and Trails Volunteer program to increase volunteering opportunities and support community organizations in assisting and contributing to regional parks, properties, and trails projects including ecological restoration, trail maintenance.	Short	In-house	Staff Time
Recommendation 3.3	Collaborate with Tla'amin, shíshálh, Klahoose, Nanoose, Homalco, K'ómoks and other Coast Salish First Nations to incorporate cultural information at regional parks and explore opportunities to protect culturally significant sites and incorporate traditional knowledge.	Medium	In-house	Allocate $10-,000- 20,000 annually to planning and implementation of collaborative projects.
Recommendation 3.4	Support community groups in their efforts to seek authorization for backcountry trails on Provincial land.	Medium	In-house	Staff Time

Recommendation	Description	Time-frame Immediate: as soon as possible; Short: 0-3 yrs); Medium (3-10 yrs) or Long Term (10+ yrs)	Responsibility	Resource (Operational/ Staff Time)
Goal 4: Enhance the user experience at parks and beach access trails.				
Recommendation 4.1	Develop a monitoring system to understand current levels of service and determine emerging needs.	Medium	In-house	Staff Time
Recommendation 4.2	Continue to assess regional parks to identify barriers to access and opportunities to provide improved accessibility for all ages and abilities.	Short	Consultant	$20,000 - $40,000
Recommendation 4.3	Provide clear accessibility information on the qRD's website, park webpages, and at trailheads.	Short	In-house	Staff Time
Recommendation 4.4	Ensure all regional parks and beach access trails are identified with signage.	Medium	In-house	$2,500 per site
Recommendation 4.5	Identify opportunities to incorporate more support amenities such as washrooms, signage, and parking at select regional parks and beach access trails.	Short	In-house/ Consultant	Staff Time. Allocate $15,000 - $25,000 annually for the maintenance and operations of 3-5 washrooms.
Goal 5: Support active transportation and a connected community.				
Recommendation 5.1	Determine the feasibility of creating regional active transportation corridors to connect regional parks and communities.	Long	Consultant	$150,000
Recommendation 5.2	Coordinate with other jurisdictions, First Nations, land managers, and landowners to identify partnership opportunities for active transportation initiatives.	Long	In-house	Staff Time
Recommendation 5.3	Develop an active transportation corridor implementation plan that identifies: • Priority ratings; • Estimated costs; • Jurisdictional/land ownership concerns; • Grant and other funding opportunities; and/or • Design considerations/standards.	Long	Consultant	$75,000-100,000

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A - PARK CLASSIFICATION

The qRD currently manages regional parks, community parks, beach access trails, and active transportation corridors. Regional parks in the qRD comprise a variety of different types of open spaces including natural parkland, campgrounds, and active parks with outdoor recreation opportunities and amenities.

Other local governments use park classification systems to outline the intended purpose of each park type and identify the different roles regional parks play within the community. Classification systems can help determine appropriate types of usage and usage levels, levels of park management and maintenance, and help manage the community's expectations. The qRD's established level of service (high, medium and low) could be used to inform parkland classifications with parks with higher existing levels of service being designated as either regional recreation areas or campground areas.

The qRDs parks could be classified into the following categories:

Regional Park Classification	Primary Focus	Regional Parks
Regional Natural Area	Regional Natural Areas are valued for protecting areas that are significant to the environmental character of the region and significant ecological communities. Regional parks designated as Regional Natural Areas should support a range of low impact outdoor experiences and activities that do not interfere with natural systems. This designation could be informed by an ecological assessment and inventory of significant ecological areas in the qRD.	• Boot Point Regional Park • Diver's Rock Regional Park • Myrtle Rocks Regional Park • Rossander Regional Park
Regional Recreation Area	Regional Recreation Areas are valued for providing opportunities for a variety of outdoor experiences, activities, and events that are more intensive and would have a greater impact on the natural environment. Regional parks designated as Regional Recreation Areas would have higher management and maintenance requirements, and higher operating costs to manage a higher number of visitors.	• Craig Regional Park • Klah Ah Men Lund Gazebo Regional Park • Palm Beach Regional Park • Paradise Exhibition Park
Regional Campground Area	Regional Campground Areas are valued for protecting natural areas and for providing access to amenities for camping, and recreational day use. Regional parks designated as Regional Campground Areas would have higher management and maintenance requirements, and operating costs to provide the services required to support camping.	• Haywire Bay Regional Park • Shelter Point Regional Park

APPENDIX B - MANAGEMENT PLANS & ZONES

In addition to having classifications for regional parks, other local governments also develop management plans, that indicate the different management zones in parks.

Management plans are helpful for determining how a regional park will be developed and managed, and what services will be provided. Management plans indicate if natural and/or cultural areas within parks require protection, and if there are areas appropriate for events, programming, or recreational activities.

A management plan indicates the Regional Park's classification and outlines the different management zones present within the park. Parks may have several different management zones, for example parks with a focus on providing active recreation may also contain areas that should be protected for their environmental or ecological significance.

Evidence-based decision-making, including an inventory and analysis of existing park features, supports the identification of different management zones, and consultation with First Nations, stakeholders and the local community helps determine interests, values and emerging issues related to existing and future park use. Management plans should also identify a list of improvements and capital projects, mitigation measures, and a park monitoring system to identify potential challenges that might arise.

Management Zones	Description	Appropriate Uses	
		Activities/ Uses	**Facilities / Infrastructure**
Active Recreation Zone	Active Recreation Zones provide opportunities for concentrated recreational park use.	• Community events • Active recreation (soccer, frisbee, etc.) • Parking areas	• Playgrounds • Picnic areas (barbeques, tables) • Bandshells, shade structures • Washroom buildings
Nature Recreation Zone	Nature Recreation Zones balance the protection of natural areas while providing access for less intensive recreation purposes.	• Passive recreation (walking, swimming, nature appreciation, etc.)	• Walking/hiking trails • Seating, signage
Environmental Protection Zone	Environmental Protection Zones protect areas of environmental and ecological significance or areas that are being restored.	• These zones would allow minimal or restricted access.	• Walking/hiking trails • Fencing and/or interpretive signage indicating the reason for protection.
Cultural Protection Zone	Cultural Protection Zones protect areas of cultural significance.	• These zones would allow minimal or restricted access. • Cooperation with First Nations communities for traditional uses.	• Walking/hiking trails • Fencing and/or interpretive signage indicating the reason for protection.

qathet
REGIONAL DISTRICT

SECTION	
POLICY	
SUBJECT	DRAFT PARKLAND ACQUISITION POLICY
ADOPTED	
AMENDED	

POLICY STATEMENT:

Providing residents with access to high quality recreation opportunities, protecting natural areas, and acquiring regionally significant lands are key objectives of the qathet Regional District. To meet these objectives, it is important to identify priorities for parkland acquisition that are in line with existing and future community needs. With limited funding for additional parkland, this policy leverages existing and future partnerships and employs creative approaches to expand parks and trails in the region.

PURPOSE:

To establish a strategic approach for the acquisition of new regional parks within the qathet region. The parkland acquisition policy serves as a decision-making tool to guide the acquisition of parks in the regional district over the next 10 years.

RESPONSIBILITY/AUTHORITY TO ACT:

The following is an outline of the roles and responsibilities for the delivery of this policy:

Board

The Board may, by resolution:

a) Approve or disapprove the acquisition of any new regional parkland following an evaluation of the proposed land using the parkland acquisition criteria score sheet (Appendix A).
b) Identify issues, suggest policy updates, and adopt revisions.

Chief Administrative Officer and Staff

The Chief Administrative Officer and staff will:

a) Administer the policy;
b) Make recommendations to the Board on the acquisition of any regional park; and
c) Identify issues and suggest policy updates to the Board.

PARKLAND ACQUISITION CRITERIA:

The following parkland acquisition criteria were developed as a part of the Parks and Greenspace Plan (2010) and were confirmed during community engagement for the Parks and Trails Strategy (2023).To guide decisions on acquisition of regionally significant parkland the qRD shall prioritize the acquisition of:

- Sites with unique/significant landscape features

- Sites with sensitive ecosystems/high levels of biodiversity

- Sites that contain species at risk

- Sites that have key habitats/wildlife corridors

- Sites with high cultural, historic, or heritage value

- Sites that are connected to other parks and trails

- Sites with high education/research value

- Sites that are accessible

- Sites that are complementary to the parks system

- Sites in areas with little existing parkland

- Sites that are highly valued by the community

- Sites that are in threat from development

- Sites with partnership opportunities with other qRD planning and conservation initiatives

- Sites that are available for acquisition

- Sites that can be reasonably managed by the qRD

- Larger sites

- Sites that have high climate change mitigation potential

- Sites that are complementary to planning initiatives

FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES:

The qRD has acquired parkland through various acquisition methods including partnerships with various governmental and non-governmental organizations, donations, and direct purchases.

- Regional Parks are located on lands that are owned by the Regional District, on Crown land leased from the province, or on Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure

(MoTI) right-of-way land and are established by bylaw and financed by taxpayers from across the region.

- Community Parks Services have been established by bylaw for Electoral Areas A, B, C and D (Texada Island). Community parkland, or payment for park purposes, is acquired by the qRD through the subdivision process. Conditions for the dedication of park land, or payment in lieu of park dedication, are set out under Section 510 of the provincial Local Government Act. Payments retained during the subdivision process are set aside in a community park reserve fund for future parkland acquisition. Community Parks on Texada are financed by taxpayers from Texada Island. Similarly, community parks in Electoral Area A are financed by taxpayers from Electoral Area A, community parks in Electoral Area B are financed by taxpayers from Electoral Area B, and community parks in Electoral Area C are financed by taxpayers from Electoral Area C.

The qRD's Parkland Acquisition Strategy (2015) identifies various funding opportunities to facilitate the acquisition of additional parkland. The qRD has made progress on several of the recommendations, including:

- Increasing the requisition limit of "Regional Park Conversion and Service Establishment Bylaw No. 439, 2010", and

- Establishing the Statutory Reserve Fund for Regional Parks Acquisition through Bylaw 555.

There are also recommendations identified in the Regional District's Parkland Acquisition Strategy (2015) that could be used as tools in the future to facilitate the acquisition of additional parkland, including:

- Using long-term borrowing to fund the acquisition of new parkland.

- Directing staff to research and apply for grants to boost parkland acquisition funds.

- Exploring opportunities for donations:

  o Actively encouraging financial contributions and gifts of land that meet parkland acquisition criteria and provide charitable tax receipts in return.

  o Gifts of Land under the Federal Ecological Gifts Program.

  o Gifts of Land to the American Friends of Canadian Land Trusts.

PARTNERSHIP OPPORTUNITIES:

There are parks and protected areas in the qRD that have been made possible through partnerships with private landowners, and different governmental and non-governmental organizations, including local community organizations, and conservation organizations. Partnerships are integral to the provision of parks and trails throughout the region and should be maintained and strengthened.

The Regional District's Parkland Acquisition Strategy (2015) identifies six partnership opportunities that could facilitate access to additional parkland:

- Partner with First Nations

  o The qRD could work with First Nations communities on parks and trails initiatives that share common benefits.

- Partner with Local Community Groups

  o Local community groups provide essential services by maintaining parks and trails, providing infrastructure for access to backcountry and alpine recreation areas, and maintaining and forming partnerships with landowners for access to privately owned areas.

- Partner with Land Trusts

  o The qRD has several sites that have been acquired and protected through land trusts including the Nature Trust of British Columbia and Islands Trust Fund.

- Partner with Private Landowners

  o Developing conservation covenants with private landowners is another type of partnership that could be explored.

- Partner with Crown Land Tenure Holders

  o Maintain communication and partnerships with licensed holders of Crown land, including Western Forest Products Inc (WFP) for example, for access to areas for recreation.

- Partner with Other Appropriate Government Agencies

  o Properties could be acquired through partnerships with various levels of government and government agencies. For example, BC Parks has previously expressed interest in partnering with the land trusts in the qRD to acquire parkland.

There are two additional Crownland Opportunities for acquiring parkland:

- Pursue Sponsored Crown Grants and/or Nominal Rent Tenures over applicable Crownland portions of parkland acquisition sites.

- Pursue Section 56 Trail Establishments and/or Section 57 Trail Authorizations over applicable Crown land portions of the parkland acquisition sites.

APPENDIX A – Parkland Acquisition Criteria Score Sheet and Summary Sheet

PURPOSE:

The Parkland Acquisition Criteria Score Sheet and Summary Sheet are intended to be used to rank and compare candidate sites for acquisition as regional parks.

INSTRUCTIONS:

Use the Parkland Acquisition Criteria Score Sheet to rank each potential site for acquisition. Definitions and a rating guide for each criterion are to be used to determine the score assigned to a potential site in each section. Each criterion is rated on a scale from Low (1 point) to High (5 points) and then multiplied by the number in the multiplier category. The multiplier represents the relative weighting of the category which was informed by Regional District and community priorities. Each site will be assigned a total score out of 250. Once all the candidate sites have been ranked, they can be added to the summary sheet and for easy comparison.

APPENDIX A - Parkland Acquisition Criteria Score Sheet

SCORE SHEET - PARK ACQUSITION CRITERIA

Properties rated are those identified as desirable additions to existing regional park system. Highly-rated lands are those that would significantly contribute to the overall ability of the park system to deliver the conservation and recreation objectives of the park. As smaller components of the whole, they may rate highly in specific areas rather than encompass the entire spectrum of desirable values.

Candidate Site Name:
Principle Reason for Acquisition

Electoral Area:
Legal Description:

Rating | Low/Poor | Medium | High/Excellent
| | 1   2   3   4   5

Criteria	Definitions	Rating Guide	Multiplier	Score
1. AVAILABILITY, SIZE, MANAGEMENT, AND EQUITY				
1 a. Availability	***Sites that are available for acquisition*** *Site is readily available, does not have any existing constraints that would limit park use and management, and does not present unreasonable development costs to the qRD.*	**Use the following to rank this criteria:** (1) Low = The site is not currently available for acquisition and/or is jurisdictionally challenging to develop a regional park on the site (i.e. Crown Land, First Nations Land, Environmental Reserve, etc.). (3) Medium = The site is available for acquisition or may become available but acquiring the site presents challenges such as high development or acquisition costs. (5) High = The site is available for acquisition and presents few barriers to acquisition.	10	
1 b. Size	***Larger sites*** *Acquisition is prioritized depending on the relative size of the site. The larger the natural area the more important.*	**Use the following to rank this criteria:** (1) Low = Sites smaller than 5 hectares. (3) Medium = Sites between 5-30 hectares. (5) High = Sites larger than 30 hectares.	5	
1 c. Management	***Sites that can be reasonably managed by the qRD.*** *Acquisition is prioritized if the site does not present unreasonable management requirements to the qRD or partners.*	**Use the following to rank this criteria:** (1) Low = Sites that present unreasonable management requirements such as remote locations or where service requirements <u>would</u> exceed the level of service provided at current regional parks and beach access trails. (3) Medium = Sites that do not present unreasonable management requirements and where the service requirements <u>would not</u> exceed the level of service provided at current regional parks and beach access trails. (5) High = Sites that do not present unreasonable management requirements and would require a level of service below current regional parks and beach access trails.	5	
1 d. Equity	***Sites in areas with little existing parkland*** *Acquisition is prioritized if a potential site would address a gap in parkland availability to residents or is in an underserved area with no or few existing parks. The parcel is prioritized if it is centrally located and minimizes the distance residents need to walk to a park. Acquisition is prioritized in areas the value of the acquisition is relative to the amount of people who would benefit.*	**Use the following to rank this criteria:** (1) Low = Sites in electoral areas with more than 100 hectares of regional parkland. (3) Medium = Sites with less than 75 hectares of regional parkland. (5) High = Sites with less than 25 hectares of regional parkland.	5	
Total Section 1				/125
2. THREATS AND PROTECTION				
2 a. Development	***Sites that are in threat from development*** *Acquisition is prioritized if the site is threatened by potential development and is given priority over similar resources not vulnerable to destruction or development.*	**Use the following to rank this criteria:** (1) Low = Sites that may be developed in the next 10 or more years. (3) Medium = Sites that may be developed in the next 5 years. (5) High = Sites that are in immediate threat by development (less than 5 years).	5	
2 b. Environmental Protection	***Sites that have key habitats/wildlife corridors; and/ or sites with sensitive ecosystems/high levels of biodiversity/species at risk*** *Acquisition is prioritized if a site provides ecological connectivity including linkages and wildlife corridors to natural areas, and sensitive habitat, or forms larger parcels of natural areas.* *Acquisition is prioritized if the site is a natural area with high conservation and ecological value, including habitat and biological diversity, and contributes to the vitality of the ecosystem (key habitat, migration areas, wildlife corridors, wetlands).* *Acquisition is prioritized if the site or area contains rare, threatened, or endangered plants, animals, and ecosystems, or contains habitat types that are currently under-represented in the park system.*	**Use the following to rank this criteria:** (1) Low = Sites with non sensitive or modified ecosystems, small, highly disturbed with no documented rare or endangered species, with fragmented habitats/ minimal documented wildlife corridors and not a key element requiring restoration. (3) Medium = Sites with sensitive ecosystems, some disturbance, moderate size, some intact habitats/ wildlife corridors, suspected rare and endangered species presence and use or moderately important element requiring restoration. (5) High = Sites with sensitive ecosystems, effective size to preserve ecosystem, in good condition, and confirmed presence of rare or endangered species <u>or an opportunity to restore</u> a critical component of an important ecosystem with significant overall synergistic benefits.	5	
2 c. Cultural Protection	***Sites with high cultural, historic, or heritage value; and/ or sites with unique/significant landscape features*** *Acquisition is prioritized if the site has cultural significance (historic features, or archaeological resources), and would have the potential for effective protection and/or management/interpretation. Input from First Nations should be gathered before acquiring a site with important First Nations cultural values. Opportunities for collaboration and reconciliation with First Nations should also be prioritized.* *Acquisition is prioritized if the site or area contains unique landscape or environmental features that are representative of the area, including unique or significant vantage points or viewing opportunities (for example, to the waterfront), or offer unique park user experiences (birding, mountain biking, etc.).*	**Use the following to rank this criteria:** (1) Low = Sites with little known cultural significance and few unique landscape elements, viewing opportunities, or limited potential for novel experiences for visitors. (3) Medium = Sites with some cultural significance that presents opportunities for interpretation and/ or reconciliation. Sites with some unique landscape features that are seldom represented in the region, viewing opportunities and some potential for novel experiences for visitors.		

Criteria	Definitions	Rating Guide	Multiplier	Score
		(5) High = Sites with high cultural significance that presents opportunities for interpretation and/ or reconciliation. Sites with distinctive landscape features that are seldom represented in the region, viewing opportunities and high potential for novel experiences for visitors.	5	
2 c. Climate Change Mitigation/ Adaptation	*Sites that have high climate change mitigation potential* *Acquisition is prioritized if the site or area could provide or improve climate change mitigation and adaptation (old forests, wetlands/estuaries, coastal floodplains, riparian floodplains, groundwater protection, etc.).*	*Use the following to rank this criteria:* (1) Low = Sites with limited potential for mitigating/ adapting to climate change. (2) Medium =Sites with some potential for mitigating/ adapting to climate change. (3) High= Sites with strong potential for mitigating/ adapting to climate change.	1	
Total Section 2				*/80*

3. SOCIO-POLICAL, ACCESSIBILITY, EDUCATION				
Level of Public Interest	*Sites that are highly valued by the community* *Acquisition is prioritized if the site is highly valued by the community.*	*Use the following to rank this criteria:* (1) Low = No apparent public or political interest in subject land (3) Medium = Measurable interest from community or advocacy groups (5) High = Significant lobbying, ongoing interest, and/or media coverage	3	
Connectivity and Accessibility	*Sites that are connected to other parks and trails; and/ or Sites that are accessible.* *Acquisition is prioritized if a potential property provides or improves physical connectivity to existing parks, outdoor recreation features, and trails, and helps create a network of public spaces.* *Acquisition is prioritized if the site or area is accessible in terms of distance from residents and has the potential to provide barrier-free recreation opportunities.*	(1) Low = Sites that are in isolation, connecting to communities is not possible, and some present barriers exist to accessing recreation opportunities. (3) Medium = Sites that present some opportunities for connections between regional parks and beach access trails, and present few barriers to accessing recreation opportunities. (5) High = Sites that present significant opportunities for connections from communities to regional parks/beach access trails, or connections between communities, and present no barriers to accessing recreation opportunities.	3	
Education	*Sites with high education/research value* *Acquisition is prioritized if the site or area has the potential to provide opportunities to experience and learn about nature through outdoor interpretation and has a unique natural resource message.*	(1) Low = Sites that contain few features of educational interest and shows no current public use or desire for public use. (3) Medium = Sites that contain some landscape features of educational value but common and not in high demand. (5) High = Contain high experiential or educational values.	1	
Total Section 3				*/35*

4. LAND PLANNING				
Planning Initiatives	*Sites that are complementary to planning initiatives* *Acquisition is prioritized if the site or area complements existing qRD land use plans or Official Community Plans (OCP).*	(1) Low = The site does not relate to any existing qRD land use plan or OCP. (3) Medium = The site relates to one existing qRD land use plan or OCP. (5) High = The site relates to more than one existing qRD land use plan or OCP.	1	
Partnerships	*Sites with partnership opportunities with other qRD planning and conservation initiatives* *Acquisition is prioritized if there are potential partnership opportunities (with park planning and conservation initiatives) and opportunities to leverage funds from other sources.*	(1) Low = Few opportunities are present for potential partnerships. (3) Medium = Some opportunities are present for potential partnerships. (5) High = Many opportunities are present for potential partnerships.	1	
Total Section 4				*/10*
GRAND TOTAL			possible total score 250	

Scale: <u>Low</u>　　　<u>Low-Medium</u>　　　<u>Medium</u>　　　<u>Medium-High</u>　　　<u>High___</u>

0　　25　　50　　75　　100　　125　　150　　175　　200　　225　　250

APPENDIX A - Parkland Acquisition Criteria Summary Sheet

Summary of Ranked Sites - TOTAL		
Candidate Site Name	**Description**	**TOTAL SCORE**
Name XX		
Name XX		
Name XX		
Name XX		
Name XX		
Name XX		
Name XX		
Name XX		

Summary of Ranked Sites - BY CATEGORY		
Candidate Site Name	**Description**	**Score**
1. AVAILABILITY, SIZE, MANAGEMENT, AND EQUITY		
Total Section 1	/125	
Name XX		xx
Name XX		xx
Name XX		xx
Name XX		xx
2. THREATS AND PROTECTION		
Total Section 2		
Name XX		xx
Name XX		xx
Name XX		xx
Name XX		xx
3. SOCIO-POLICAL, ACCESSIBILITY, EDUCATION		
Total Section 3	17.5	
Name XX		xx
Name XX		xx
Name XX		xx
Name XX		xx
4. LAND PLANNING		
Total Section 4	5	
Name XX		xx
Name XX		xx
Name XX		xx
Name XX		xx

# APPENDIX D - PARK LAND ACQUISITION CRITERIA USED BY OTHER AGENCIES

Agency Name	Uniqueness / Landscape Representation	Sensitive Ecosystem / Biodiversity	Species at Risk	Key Habitat / Wildlife Corridors	Cultural, Historic or Heritage Value	Trail / Park Connectivity	Education / Research Value	Accessibility	Complementary to Parks System	Priority Sites from Past Plans	Level of Public Interest	Level of Threat	Availability for Acquisition	Partnership Potential	Management Considerations	Size	Climate Change Mitigation	Complementary to Planning Initiatives
BC Parks	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓		✓		✓	✓						
Capital Region District	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓						✓			✓	✓
Central Okanagan Regional District	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓		✓	✓	✓		
Cowichan Valley Regional District	✓	✓					✓			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓				
Metro Vancouver		✓	✓	✓		✓	✓		✓	✓		✓	✓	✓		✓		✓
Parks Canada	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓		✓		✓		✓		✓			
The Nature Trust of BC	✓	✓	✓						✓		✓		✓	✓	✓			✓

APPENDIX E - ROUND 1 ENGAGEMENT SUMMARY
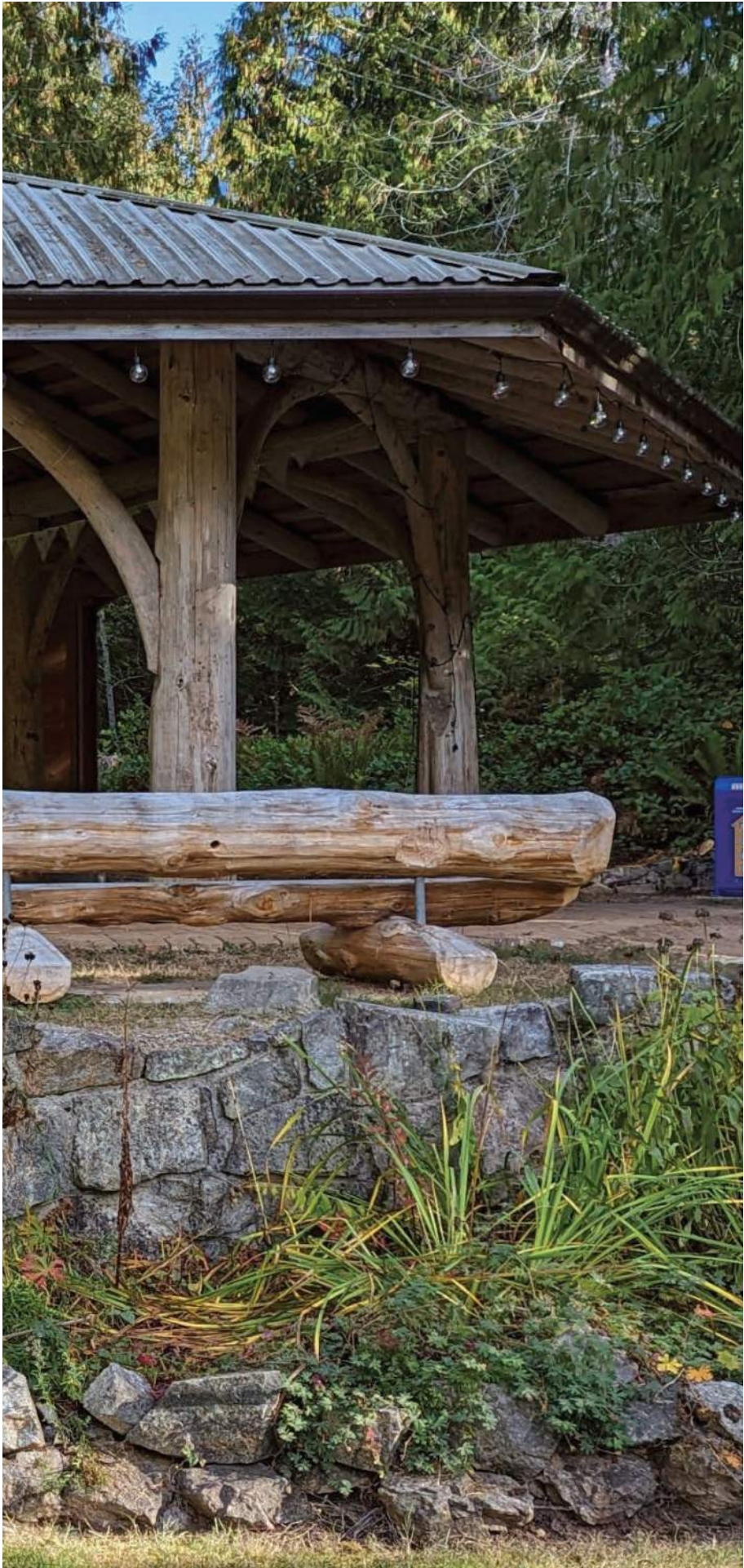
qathet Regional District

Parks and Trails Strategy

Round 1
What We Heard Report

Prepared for:

qathet
REGIONAL DISTRICT

Prepared by:

LEES+ASSOCIATES

Status: Final Report

February 2023

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The qathet Regional District (qRD) is developing a Parks and Trails Strategy to guide the future direction for parks and trails owned and operated by the qRD.

Parks and trails are a vital asset to the community, providing valuable recreation opportunities that support the health and wellness of citizens. They ensure the public has access to all that nature has to offer while also protecting those resources for future generations.

The Strategy will identify key issues, challenges and opportunities, establish goals, and highlight actions that reflect the community's desires and aspirations for parks and trails. The Strategy will be used to establish priorities, identify desired locations for future parks and trails, guide decision-making and operations, and allocate resources over the next ten years. The Strategy will be supported by community engagement and will summarize the community's desires and aspirations.

The Strategy will build on the successes of previous plans, including:

- The Parks and Greenspace Plan (2010);
- Parkland Acquisition Strategy (2015), and
- Regional Trails Plan (2016).

1.2 FIRST NATIONS ENGAGEMENT

LEES+Associates supported the qRD in engaging with the Tla'amin, Shishalh, Klahoose, Homalco, and K'omoks First Nations by writing referral letters inviting each of the nations to participate in community open houses and an online survey.

1.3   OVERALL PLANNING PROCESS

The Parks and Trails Strategy process includes the following five phases. This What We Heard Report summarizes feedback received during Phase 2 of the planning process, and the first round of community engagement.

PROJECT TIMELINE

*WE ARE HERE

PHASE 1	PHASE 2	PHASE 3	PHASE 4	PHASE 5
START-UP, INVENTORY AND ANALYSIS	ROUND 1 COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT	DRAFT PARKS AND TRAILS STRATEGY	ROUND 2 COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT	FINAL PARKS AND TRAILS STRATEGY
JULY - SEPT 2022	NOV 2022	OCT 2022 - MAR 2023	APR 2023	APR - MAY 2023

ROUND 1
VISION AND VALUES

- IN-PERSON OPEN HOUSES (4)
- ONLINE OPEN HOUSES (2)
- ONLINE SURVEY

ROUND 2
FEEDBACK ON DRAFT PLAN

- ONLINE OPEN HOUSE
- ONLINE SURVEY

2   ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY

2.1   PURPOSE OF ENGAGEMENT

Engagement is crucial to understanding the community's values, priorities, and aspirations, and to help guide the long-term planning of the qRD's parks and trails system, including the prioritization of investment in parkland across the qRD.

The four main objectives for community and stakeholder engagement included:

1. Informing and educating the community about the qRD's existing parks and trails system.
2. Consulting the community to help identify key issues, challenges, and opportunities.
3. Consulting the community in developing an overall vision and goals for the Strategy.
4. Consulting the community to identify priorities to help guide actionable recommendations for the Strategy.

2.2   HOW WE REACHED OUT

The qRD website was used as a primary information sharing tool. It was updated with information about the project objectives, planning process, and how to get involved with engagement. The qRD sent out emails inviting community members to take the online survey and attend the virtual and in-person open houses. Posters with information about the survey and open houses were also distributed throughout the qRD at community centres, businesses, and at parks and trailheads. The open houses and survey were also advertised through radio, local newspapers and magazines, social media, and community newsletters including:

- Coast FM Radio

- Powell River Peak newspaper

- qathet Living magazine

- Lasqueti.ca

- Lund Barnacle magazine

2.3   ENGAGEMENT TOOLS

Round 1 community engagement included a public online survey and six public open houses. The details of these activities are described below, and the results are reported in Section 3.0 of this report.

2.3.1   ONLINE PUBLIC SURVEY

Input from the public was gathered through an online survey posted on the qRD's website. Survey responses were collected from November 14th to 30th, 2022 using the online platform Survey Monkey. There were 370 responses, and the results are summarized in Section 3.0 of this report.

2.3.2   COMMUNITY OPEN HOUSES

There were four in-person open houses, and two online open houses held in November 2022.

In-person Open Houses:

1. Electoral Area A - North of Town
2. Electoral Area B & C - South of Town
3. Electoral Area D - Texada Island
4. City of Powell River

Online Open Houses:

1. Electoral Area E - Lasqueti Island
2. Savary Island (in Electoral Area A)

Engagement by the Numbers
▪ 370 participants in online survey
▪ 99 participants in community open houses
▪ 17 community members provided email feedback

The open houses provided information on the project, a current inventory of parks and trails, a description of park services and how regional and community parks are funded. Interactive display boards were used to collect input from the community. Participants were also able to ask questions and share input directly with the consulting team and qRD staff.

The following questions were asked at the open houses:

- What do you love and value most about qRD parks and trails?

- How can existing qRD parks and trails be improved? Is anything missing?

- Participants were asked to indicate the priorities between each of the following pairings:

  o Improve existing parks and trails or establish new parks and trails

  o Parkland for conservation or parkland for recreation

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- o   Small community parks <u>or</u> large destination parks
- o   Maintain current budget for park <u>or</u> increase funding for parks
- What words best reflect your vision for the future of qRD parks and trails?
- Where would you like to see new qRD parks and trails in the future?
- How could accessibility at qRD parks and trails be improved (for the elderly or those with mobility challenges, for example)?
- What else do we need to know?

Figure 1- North of Town Open House

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3 PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT OUTCOMES

OVERVIEW OF ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITIES AND RESULTS

COMMUNITY VALUES

The following were the top community values from the first round of engagement.

Water Access

- Access to the waterfront, especially through public beach access trails, was of significant value to the community.

Connect to Nature

- Community input highlighted the importance of parks and trails for providing opportunities to connect with nature.

Protect Nature

- There was strong support for protecting nature in regional parks and trails through conservation and by preserving biodiversity.

Recreation

- There was emphasis placed on the importance of access to recreation opportunities such as walking, hiking, swimming, and picnicking.

Figure 2- Photo of South of Town Open House   *Figure 3- Photo of Texada Island Open House*

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KEY ISSUES AND OPPORTUNITIES

The following are the key issues and opportunities that emerged from the first round of engagement.

Desire for New Parks and Trails

- Open house attendees indicated that they are supportive of increasing funding for parks and trails and expanding the number of new parks and trails. Survey respondents were also slightly in favour of acquiring new parks over maintaining existing parks. Stillwater Bluffs was the top mentioned location for a new park or trail.

Continued Accessibility Improvements

- There was strong support for improving accessibility for those with mobility challenges including additional washrooms, the accessibility and maintenance of the trails, more accessible parking, and increased signage at parks and trails.

Safe Trail Connections and Active Transportation

- A key theme from the open houses was the desire for trail connections between communities and support for more opportunities for active transportation.

Volunteer Support

- The importance of volunteers for maintaining parks and trails within the qRD emerged as a key theme across the engagement process. There was also recognition of the need for the qRD to provide support to volunteers through funding.

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4   ONLINE SURVEY – SUMMARY RESULTS

Key findings from the online survey:

- The most frequently visited regional park is Palm Beach and the most popular beach access trail is Mahood Road.

- The most popular outdoor activities for survey respondents included hiking, walking, swimming, and picnicking/relaxing.

- Survey respondents highly valued regional parks and trails because of the opportunities to connect with nature, protect nature, and participate in recreation.

- Survey respondents slightly preferred prioritizing funding to expanding the number of parks over improving existing parks.

- Survey respondents equally supported funding for improving and expanding the trail system.

- The most frequently mentioned locations for a new park or trail included Stillwater Bluffs, Lasqueti Island, and Texada Island. There was also support for improving trail connections between communities and parks.

- Survey respondents indicated that hiking and walking trails, access to marine and lake shorelines, access to nature, viewpoints/viewing areas and washrooms are the top features that they value in regional parks and trails.

- Close to half of survey respondents indicated that they visit regional parks and trails once per week.

- The most cited reason for <u>not</u> visiting regional parks and trails was being too busy with work, school, or family.

- Close to 10% of survey respondents indicated that they are either somewhat dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with physical accessibility at regional parks and trails, and the top suggestions for improvement included adding washrooms, improving trails for people with mobility issues, adding more accessible parking, and increasing signage at parks and trailheads.

Q1. Most survey respondents have visited regional parks within the past 12 months. The most frequently visited regional parks are Palm Beach Regional Park (57%), Haywire Bay Regional Park (52%), Paradise Exhibition Park (41%), Myrtle Rocks Regional Park (39%), and Craig Regional Park (36%).

Which regional district parks have you visited in the last 12 months? (Please check all that apply)
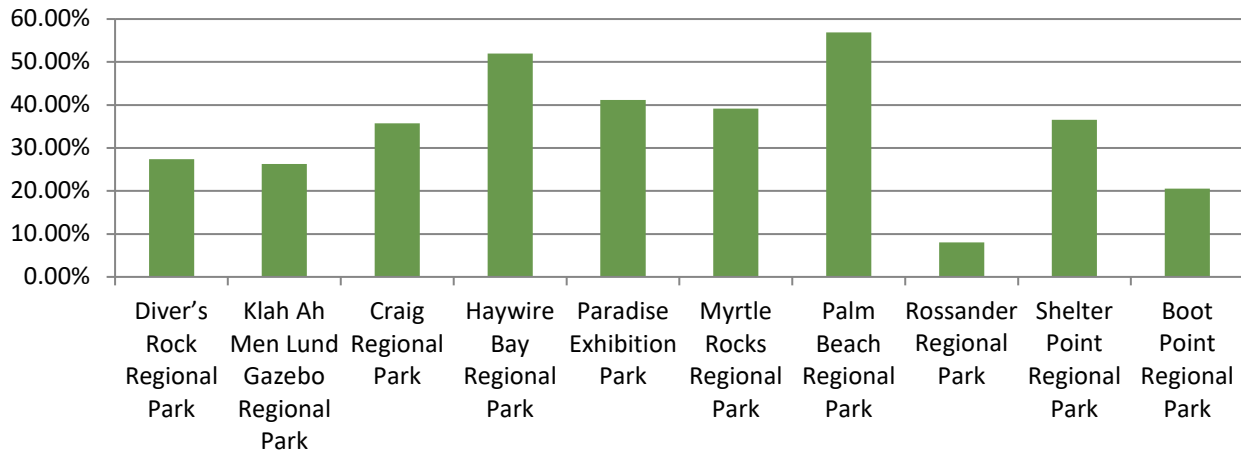
Q2. Of respondents, 75% indicated that they have visited beach access trails in the past 12 months. The most frequently visited beach access trails are Mahood Road (59%), Myrtle Rocks (49%), Emmonds Road (36%), Pebble Beach Road (36%), Canoe Bay (34%), and Southview Road (33%).

Which regional district beach access trails have you visited in the last 12 months? (Please check all that apply)

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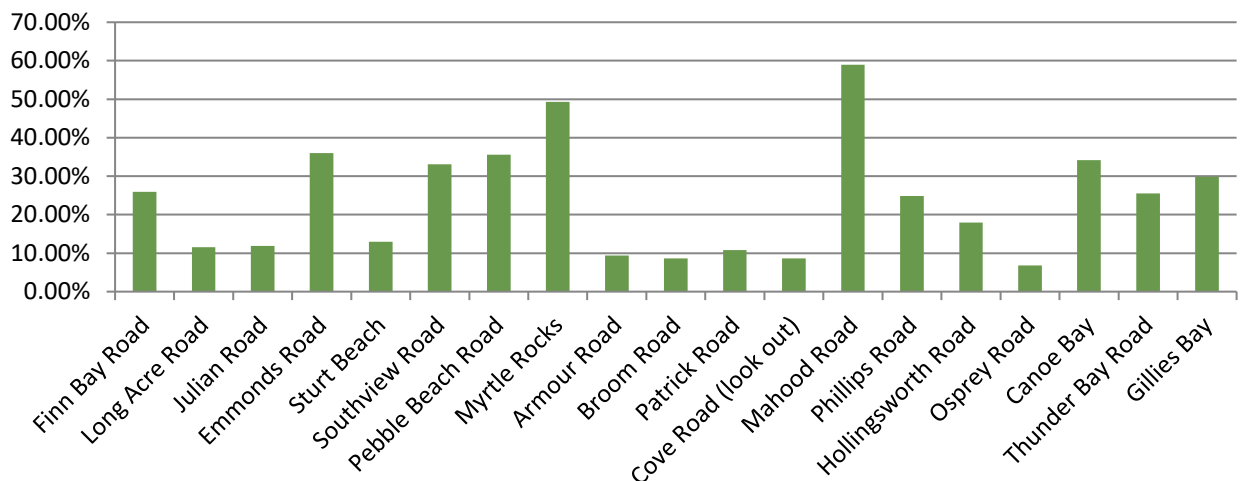
Q3. The most popular outdoor activities for respondents included walking and hiking (91%), swimming (81%), picnicking/relaxing outside (71%), kayaking/canoeing/stand-up paddleboarding, and birdwatching/wildlife viewing.

Of those who selected "other", the most frequently mentioned activities included:
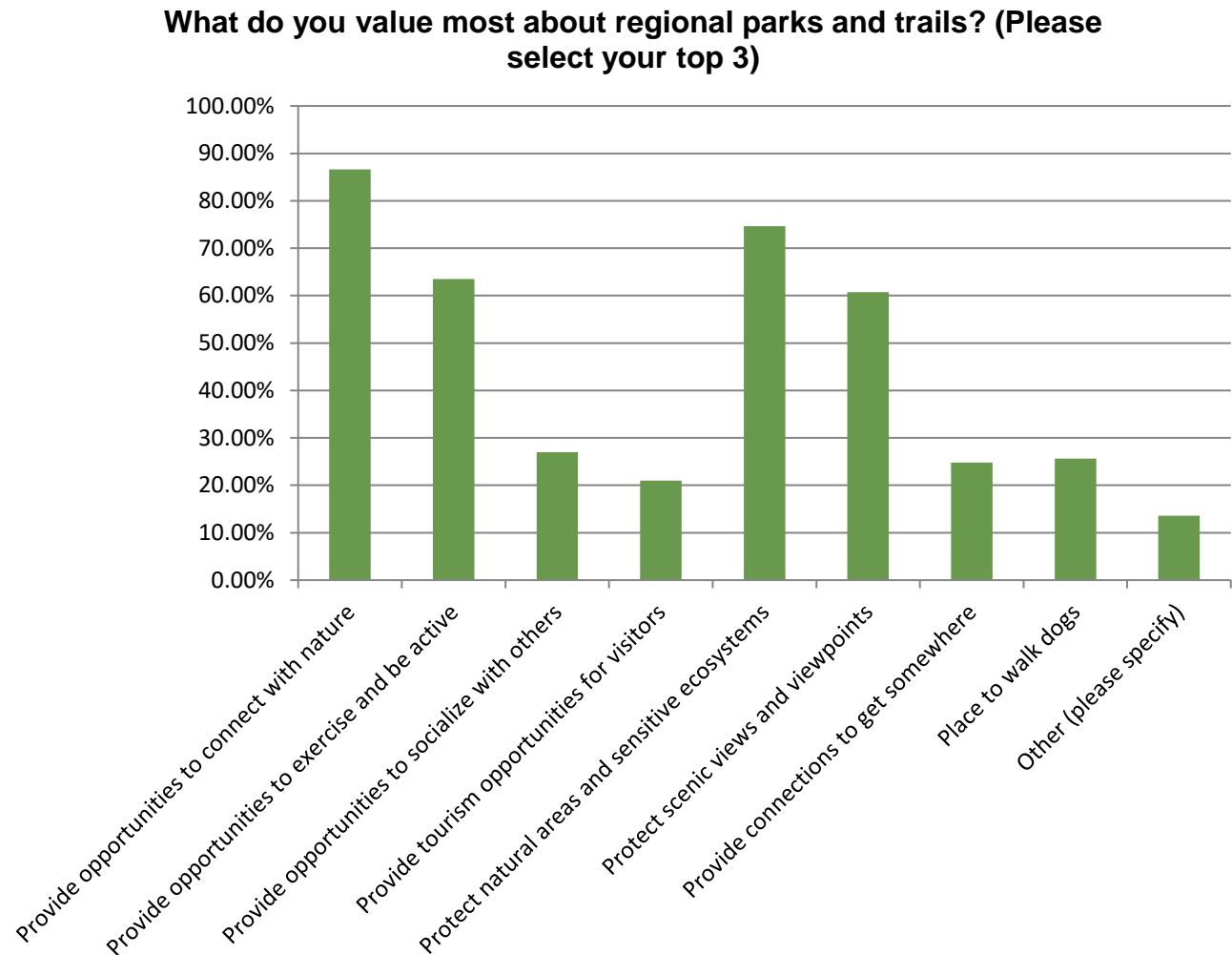
- Horseback riding (25 mentions)

- Disc golf (12 mentions)

- ATVing (10 mentions)

- Backcountry skiing and snowboarding (9 mentions)

- Camping

What types of activities do you and your family enjoy outdoors? Think of all seasons of the year. (Check all that apply)

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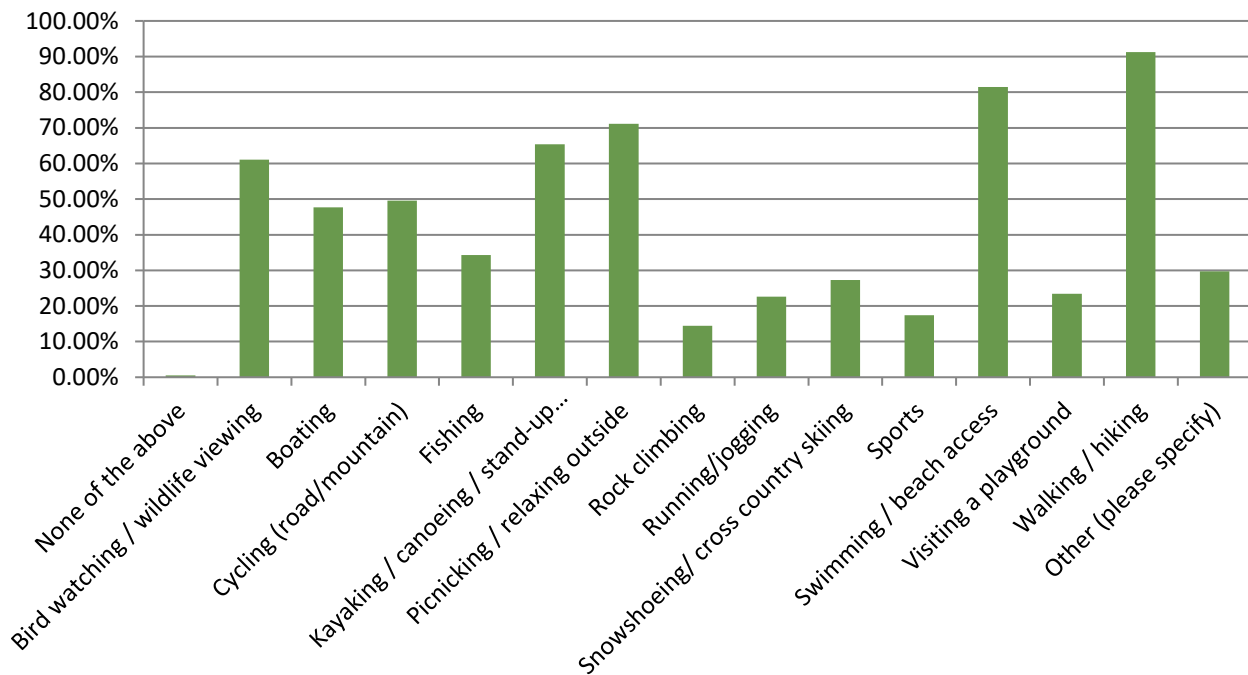
Q4. When asked what they value most about regional parks and trails, the top three responses were opportunities to connect with nature (87%), protection for natural areas and sensitive ecosystems (75%), and opportunities to exercise and be active (63%).

What do you value most about regional parks and trails? (Please select your top 3)

Of those who selected "other", the most frequently mentioned activities included:

- Horseback riding (20 mentions)
- Access to the water/beach (8 mentions)
- Disc golf (3 mentions)
- Places for kids/teens (3 mentions)
- Places to camp (2 mentions)

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Q5. Question five asked about satisfaction with ease of access to parks and trails; physical accessibility at parks and trails; overall maintenance; variety of parks and activities; variety of amenities in parks; location of parks and trails, and number of parks and trails.

Ease of Access

Close to 80% of respondents were either very satisfied or somewhat satisfied with ease of access/getting to parks and trails, and 17% of respondents from Savary Island indicated that they are very dissatisfied with ease of access/getting to parks.

Ease of access / getting to parks and trails

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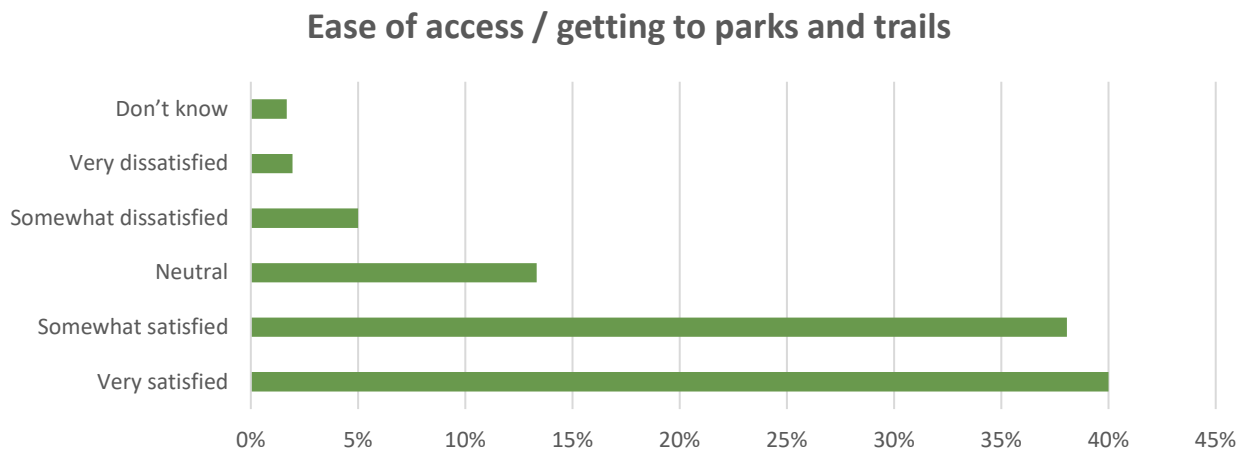
Physical Accessibility

Although most survey respondents were satisfied with the physical accessibility of parks (66%), 10% of respondents were either somewhat dissatisfied or very dissatisfied. There were higher levels of satisfaction from respondents from Powell River and the lowest level of satisfaction from respondents from Savary Island. Close to 83% of respondents from Powell River were either very or somewhat satisfied with physical accessibility in parks compared to only 20% of Savary Island respondents.

Physical accessibility at parks and trails

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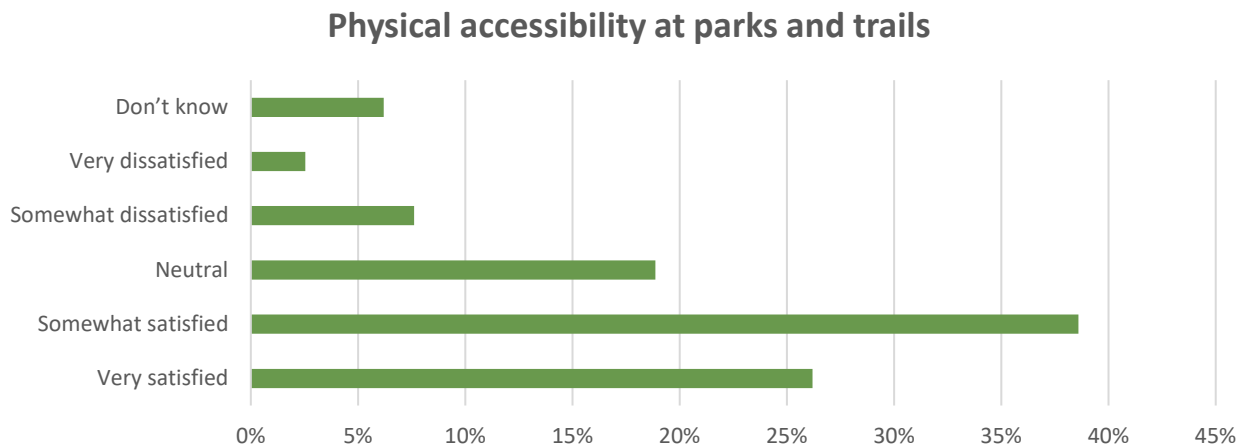
Overall Maintenance

Close to 40% of respondents were somewhat satisfied and 29% were very satisfied with overall maintenance of parks and trails. There were higher levels of satisfaction regarding park maintenance from respondents from Electoral Area A and the lowest level of satisfaction from respondents from Savary Island. Around 73% of respondents from Electoral Area A were either very or somewhat satisfied with overall maintenance in parks compared to only 17% of Savary Island respondents.

Overall maintenance
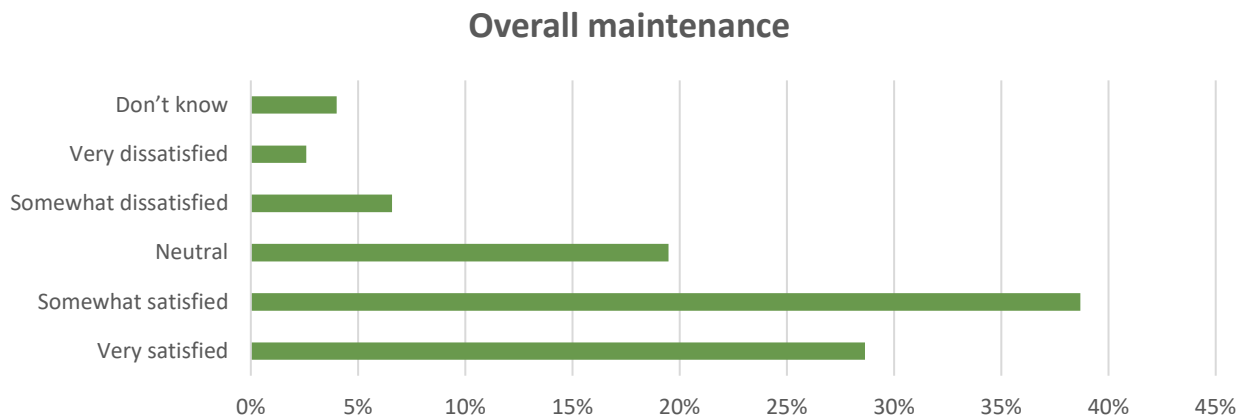
Park Activities

Of respondents, 56% were either somewhat satisfied or very satisfied with the variety of parks and activities. Overall, around 15% of respondents were either somewhat dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with the variety of parks and activities. There was a higher level of dissatisfaction from respondents from Lasqueti and Savary Islands with around 30% of these respondents indicating that they were very dissatisfied.

Variety of parks and activities

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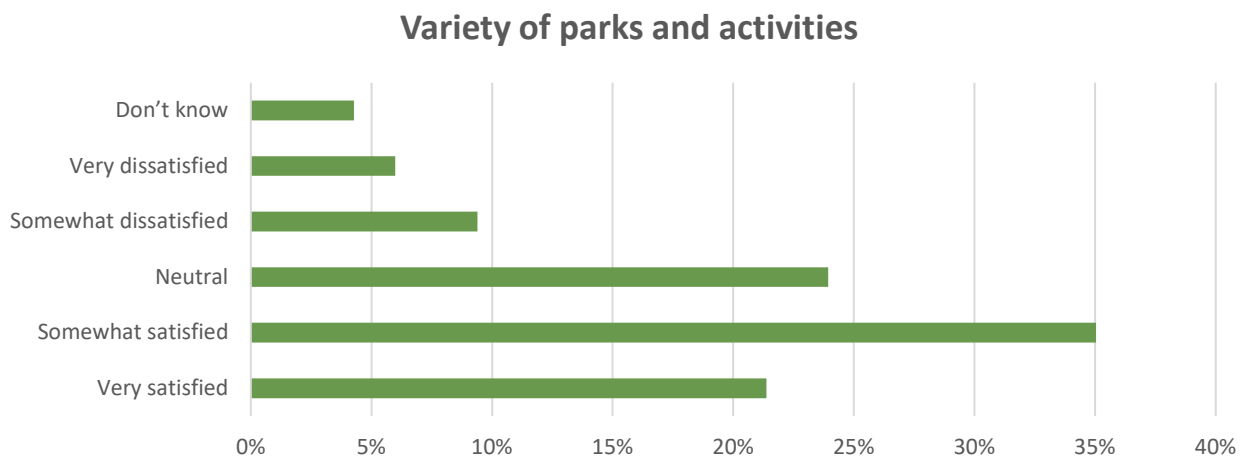
<u>Park Amenities</u>

Overall, close to 50% of respondents were either very or somewhat satisfied with the variety of amenities in parks. However, of respondents from Lasqueti and Savary Islands, 30% indicated that they were very dissatisfied with the variety of amenities in parks.

Variety of amenities in parks (seating, washrooms, waste receptacles etc.)
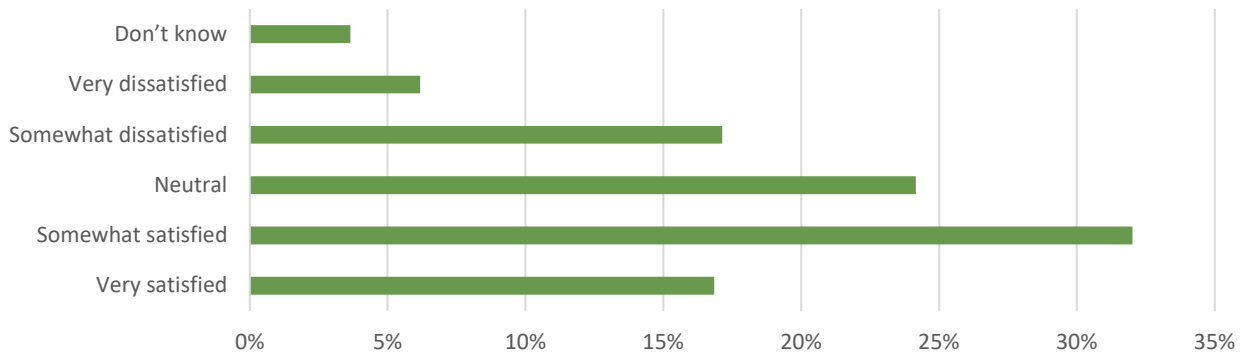
<u>Location of Parks and Trails</u>

Overall, 67% of respondents were either very or somewhat satisfied with the location of parks and trails. There were higher levels of dissatisfaction with the location of parks and trails from respondents from Texada, Lasqueti, and Savary Islands. Overall, around 15% of respondents were either somewhat or very dissatisfied compared to close to 40% of respondents from these islands.

Location of parks and trails

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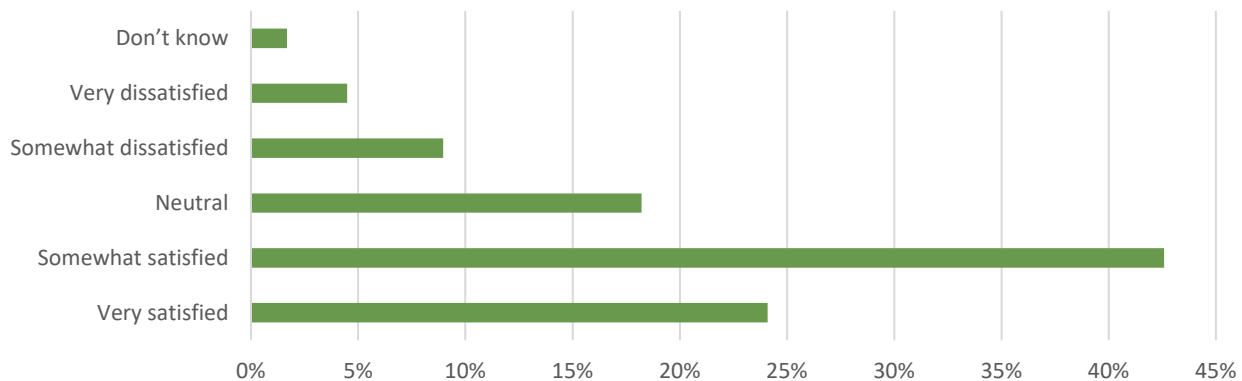
Number of Parks and Trails

Close to 50% of respondents were either very or somewhat satisfied with the number of parks and trails while nearly 20% were somewhat dissatisfied with the number of parks and trails. Levels of satisfaction were highest from respondents in Powell River and lowest amongst respondents from Lasqueti Island and Savary Island. Close to 70% of respondents from Powell River were either very or somewhat satisfied with the number of parks and trails compared to only around 14% of respondents from Savary Island and Lasqueti Island.

Number of parks and trails
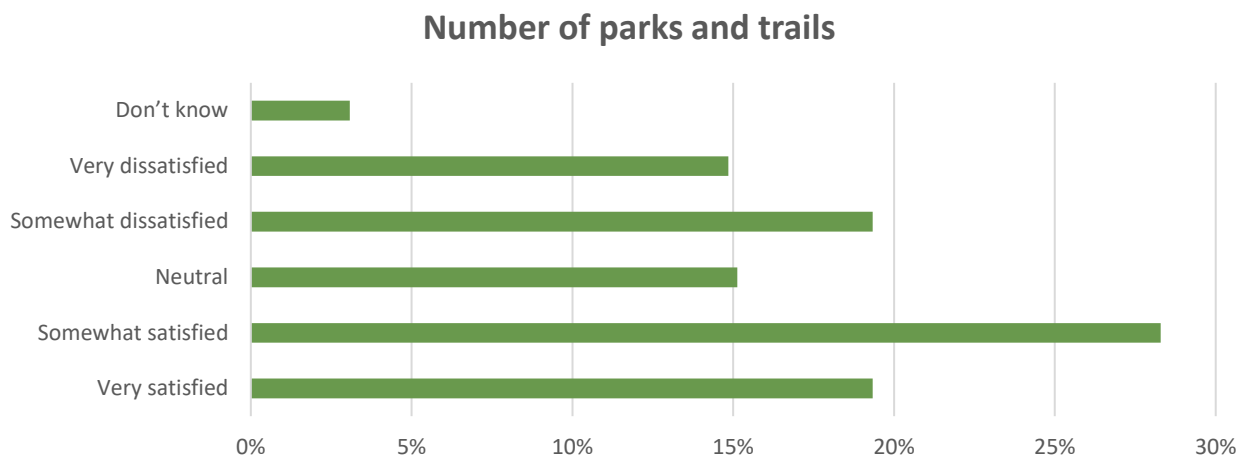
Q6. When asked about how the qRD should allocate funding over the next 10 years, the top ranked priority was to expand the amount of parks, followed by expanding the number of trails, improving existing trails, and improving existing parks.

Over the next 10 years, what should the regional district prioritize? (Please rank the following responses with 1 being your top priority and 4 being your lowest priority)

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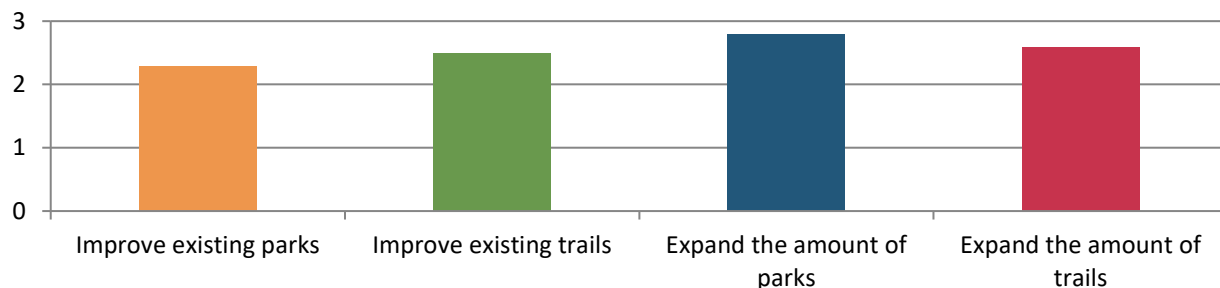
Q7. When asked about priorities for regional parks and trails over the next 10 years, responses were varied. The top choice was to allocate 50% of funding to improving parks and 50% of funding to acquiring new parks. Very few respondents supported focusing funding entirely on improving existing parks.

Over the next 10 years, how should the regional district allocate funding for parks and trails?
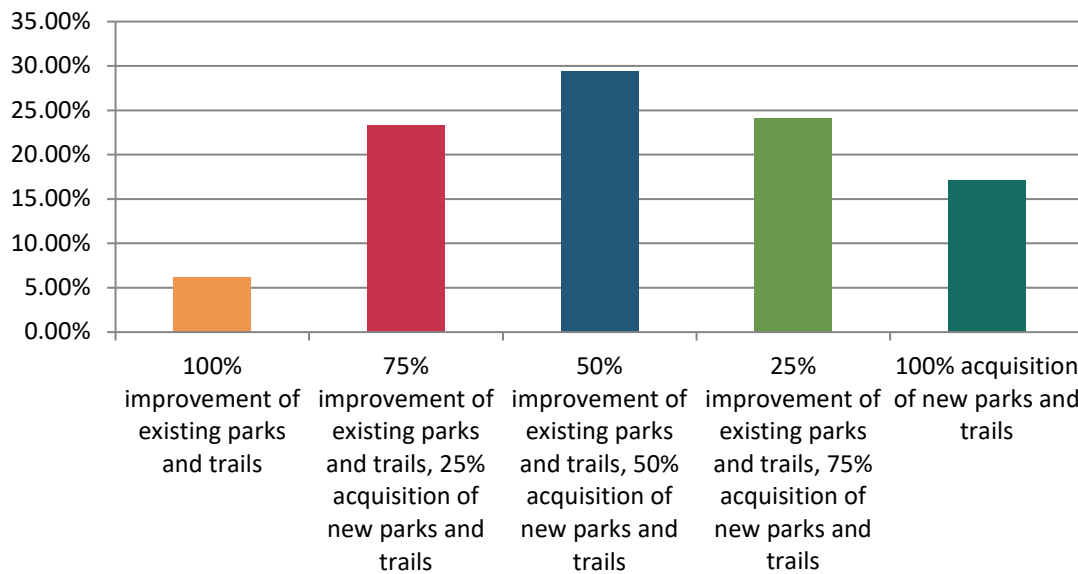

Q8. When asked where respondents would like to see new regional parks and trails in the future, over 45 locations were identified. Of those locations, the most frequently mentioned were Stillwater Bluffs (83 mentions), followed by more parks and beach access trails on Lasquesti Island (44 mentions), more public beach access throughout the qRD (30 mentions), more parks and beach access trails on Texada Island (19 mentions) and more/improved active transportation networks connecting communities (15 mentions).

Other frequently mentioned locations included:

- Backcountry access (11 mentions)
- Mahood Beach (11 mentions)
- More conservation of sensitive ecosystems (10 mentions)
- More parks and trails South of Town (8 mentions)
- More parks and beach access trails on Savary Island (8 mentions)
- More parks and trails North of Town (7 mentions)

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Q9. The top five features that survey respondents value in regional parks included hiking and walking trails (82% of responses), access to marine and lake shorelines (79% of responses), access to nature (77% of responses), viewpoints/viewing areas (43% of responses) and washrooms (34% of responses). The three features that received the lowest score include sports fields, sports courts (outdoor tennis, pickleball courts), and gardens and horticulture.

**What features do you value most in regional parks?
(Please select your top 5)**
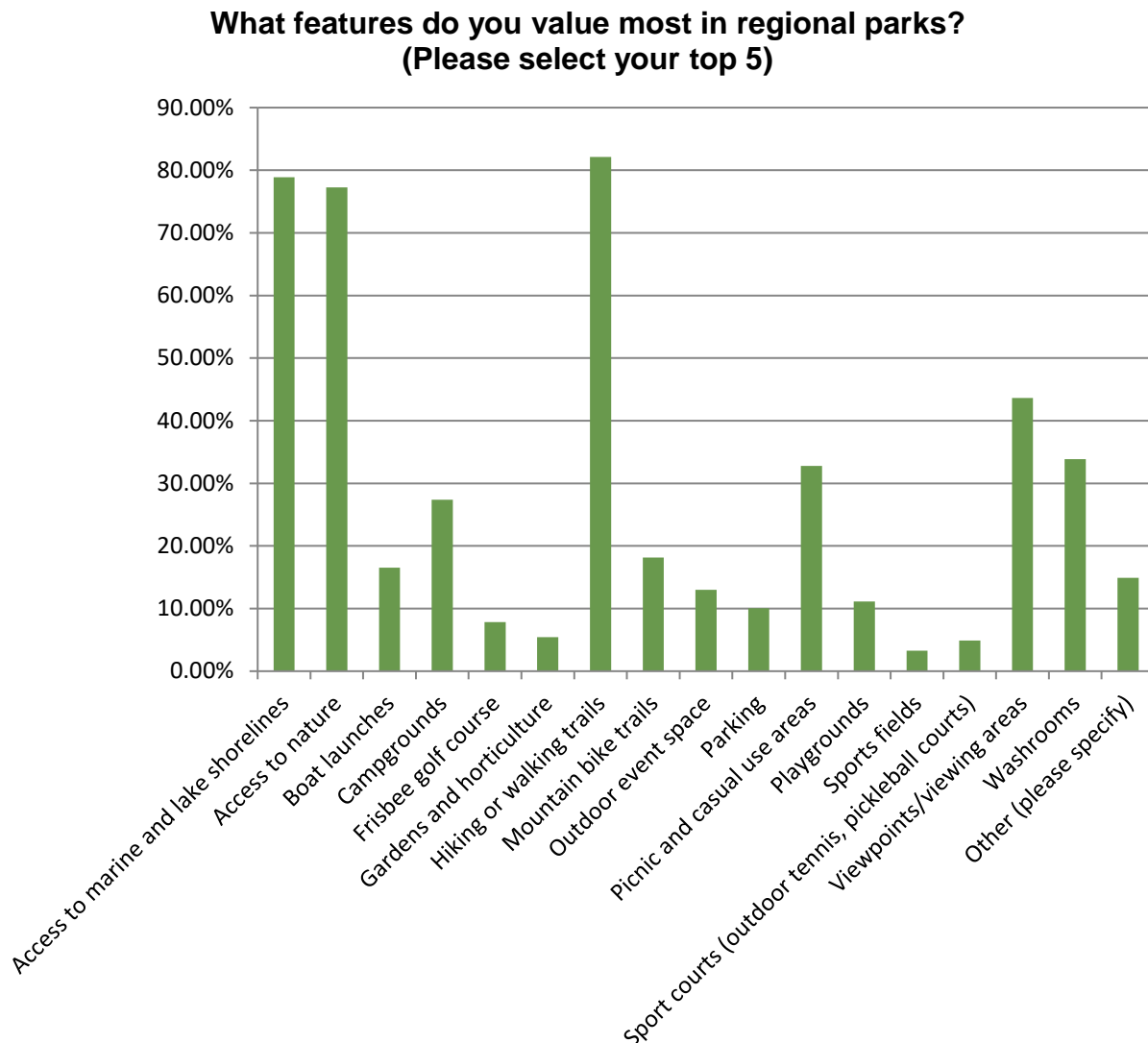
Of those who selected "other", the most frequently mentioned values included:

- Horseback riding trails (16 mentions)
- Nature preserves/conservation areas (7 mentions)
- Backcountry access/skiing trails (3 mentions)

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Q10. When asked how often respondents use regional parks and trails, close to half of respondents indicated that they use them once a week, while around 20% used them daily. Less than 2% of respondents replied that they rarely or never use regional parks and trails.

How often do you use regional district parks and trails?

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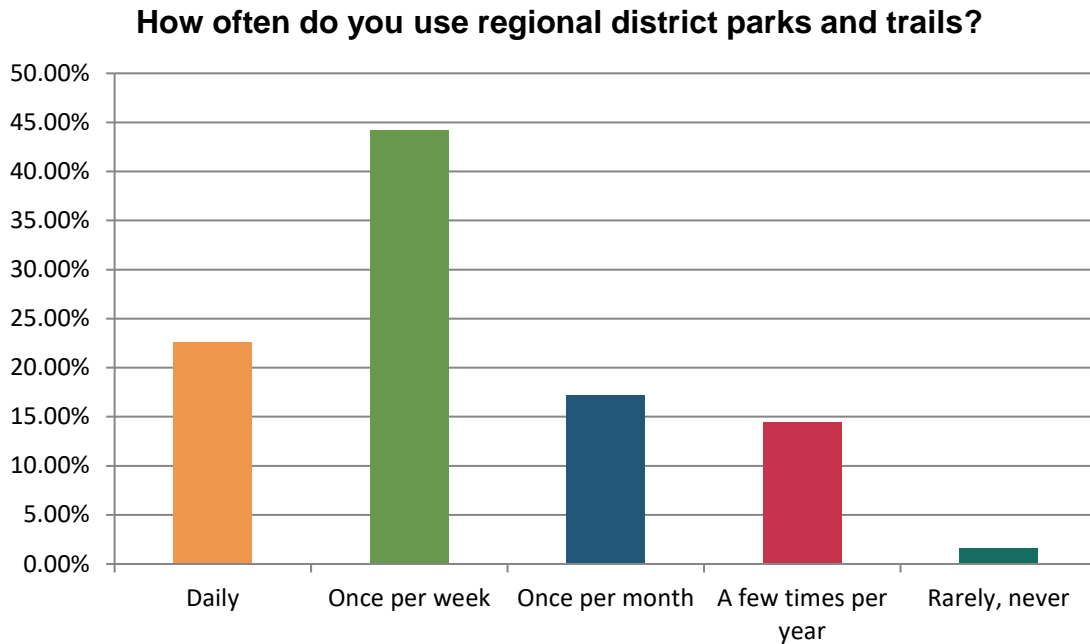
Q11. When asked if anything keeps respondents from visiting regional parks and trails, the top five barriers for respondents included:

- Too busy – work, family or school commitments (36% of reponses)
- Nothing (28% of responses)
- Too far to travel (24% of responses)
- Not accessible by biking/walking (16% of responses)
- Too crowded (9% of responses)

What, if anything, keeps you from visiting regional district parks and trails more often? (Please select your top 5 reasons)
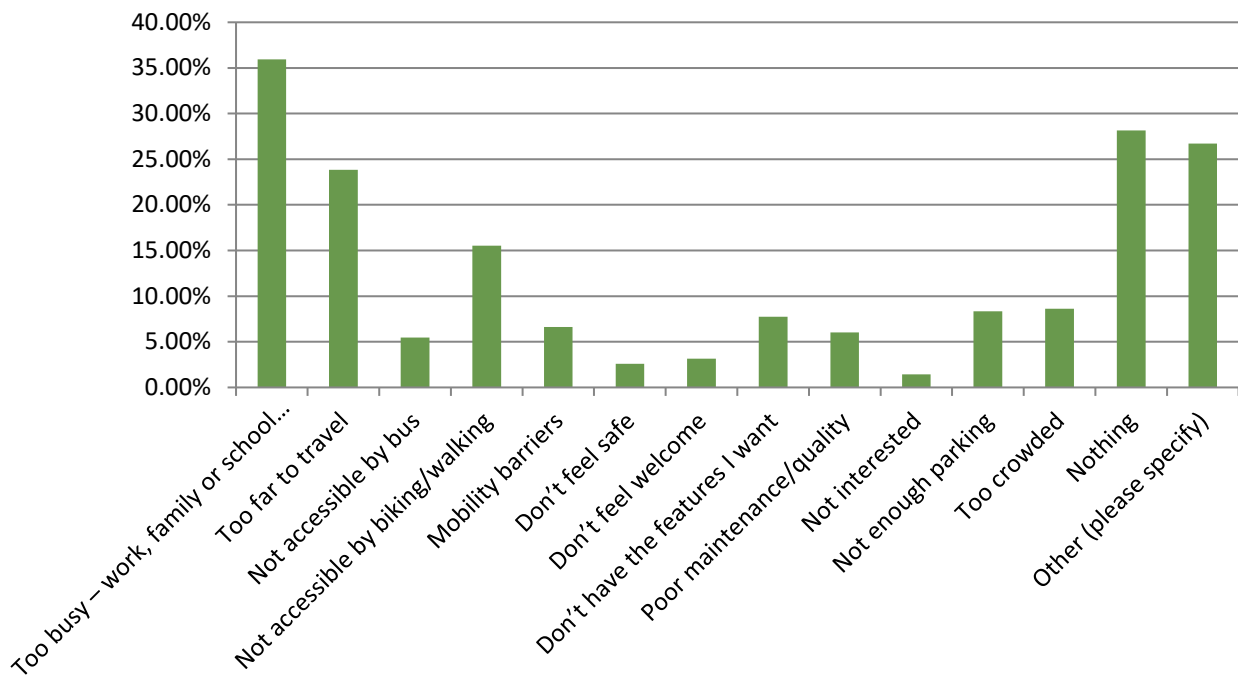
Other responses that were not included in the survey options list include:
- Lack of regional parks and trails on Texada Island (3 mentions), Lasqueti Island (15 mentions) and Savary Island (7 mentions)
- Prefer to use backcoutry areas/wilder places (5 mentions)
- Prefer to use non-regional parks and trails (5 mentions)
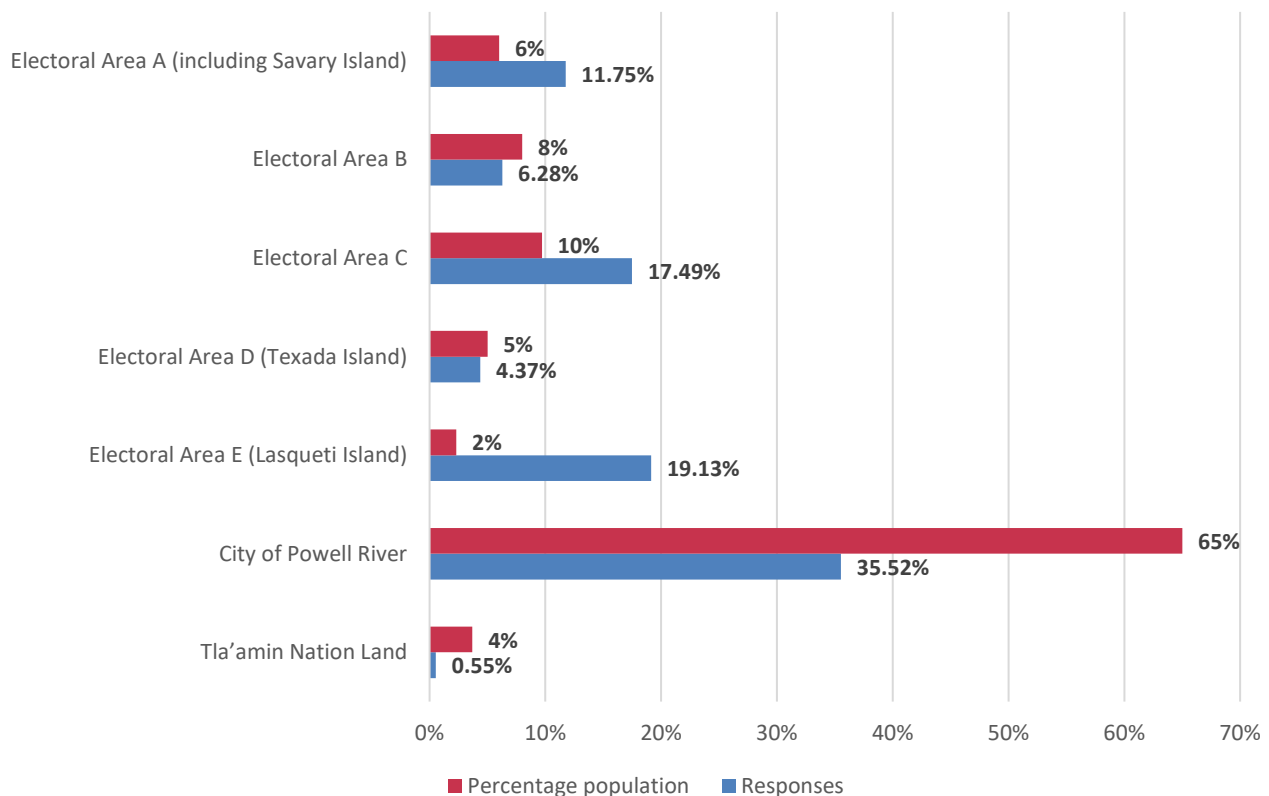- Inclement weater (4 mentions)

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Q12. In this open ended question, respondents were asked what improvements should be prioritized for making regional parks and trails more accessible and barrier-free. The most common responses included:

- More washrooms at parks and at trailheads (24% of reponses)
- Improve parks and trails for people with mobility issues (18% of responses)
- More accessible parking (11% of responses)
- More beach access trails/accessible beach access trails (8% of responses)
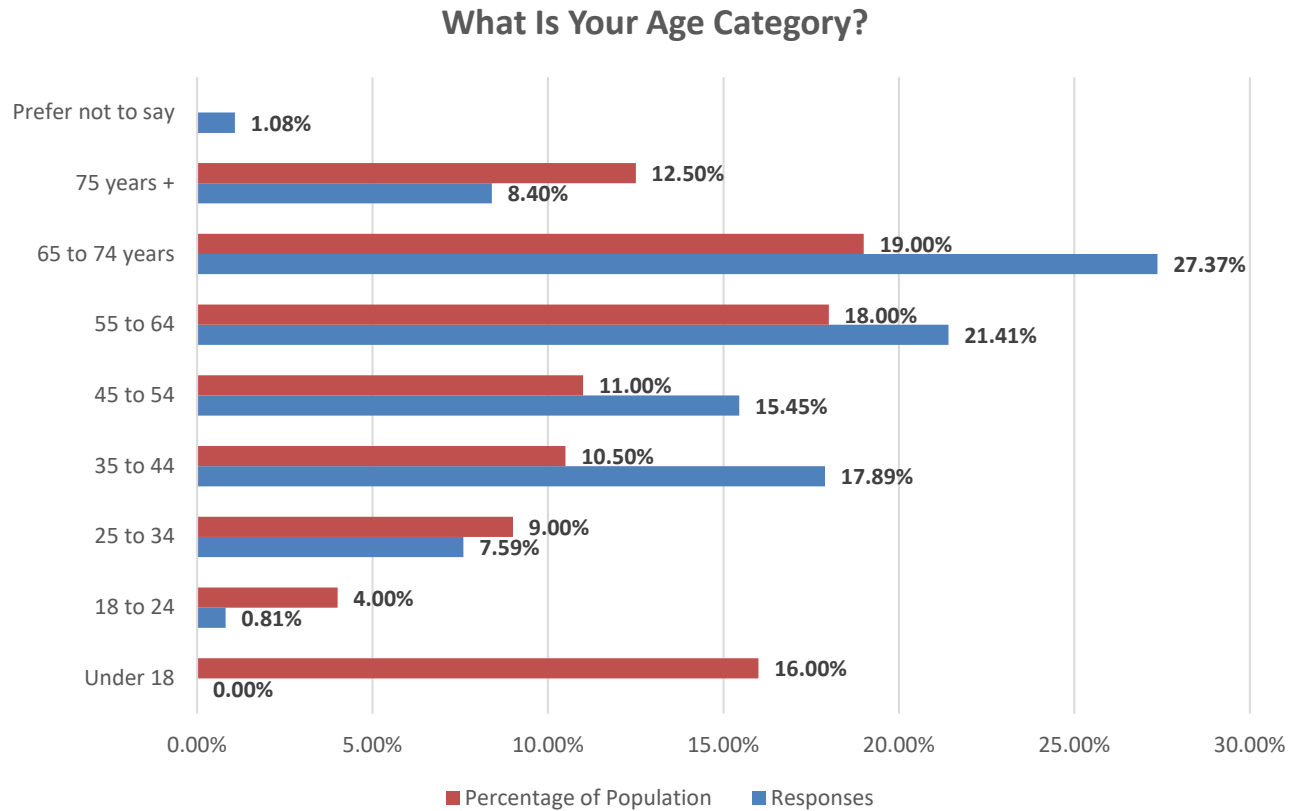- More signage at parks and at trail acceses (7% of responses)

Q13. The highest response rate was the City of Powell River (36% of respondents) and the lowest was from Tla'amin Nation (0.5% of respondents). While only 2% of the total population of the qRD lives on Lasqueti Island, close to 19% of survey respondents were from Lasqueti Island.

Where Respondents Live vs. Area Populations

Source: Statistics Canada, 2021 Census Population

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Q14. The majority of respondents responded that their age category is 65-74 years (27% of responses), 55 to 64 years (21% of responses), 35 to 44 years (18% of responses), or 45 to 54 (15% of responses). Less than 1% of respondents indicated that they were under 24.

What Is Your Age Category?

Age Category	Percentage of Population	Responses
Prefer not to say		1.08%
75 years +	12.50%	8.40%
65 to 74 years	19.00%	27.37%
55 to 64	18.00%	21.41%
45 to 54	11.00%	15.45%
35 to 44	10.50%	17.89%
25 to 34	9.00%	7.59%
18 to 24	4.00%	0.81%
Under 18	16.00%	0.00%

Source: Statistics Canada, 2021 Census Population

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Q.15. Many respondents heard about the survey through word of mouth (43% of respondents), while some heard about it through a media release (11% of respondents) and on the qRD's website (10% of respondents).

How did you hear about the Parks and Trails Strategy? (Please select all that apply)
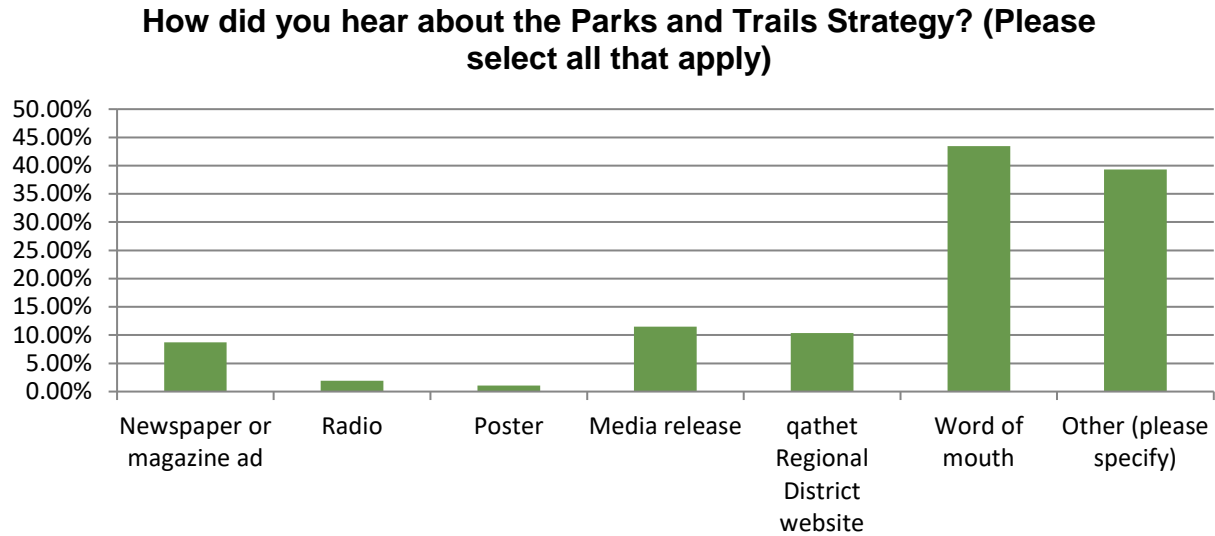
Other responses that were not included in the survey options list included:

- Community organization email list/meeting/social media (37 mentions)
- Social media (facebook, instagram, twitter) (29 mentions)
- Communications for their Regional Director (25 mentions)

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5   COMMUNITY OPEN HOUSES – KEY THEMES

During the open houses, participants were asked to share their thoughts about regional parks and trails.

5.1.1 WHAT DO YOU LOVE AND VALUE MOST ABOUT QRD PARKS AND TRAILS?

Key themes that emerged from input received at all of the open houses included:

- Volunteer commitment to maintaining parks and trails;

- Access to waterfront;

- Low-cost/free community places for the community to gather;

- Easy access to parks and trails;

- Multi-use parks and trails;

- Preservation of wild places, and

- Opportunities to connect with nature.

Participants at the *City of Powell River* open house placed a higher emphasis on access to backcountry recreation areas. Attendees at the *South of Town* open house expressed significant interest in having a variety of multi-use parks and trails. Those at the *Texada Island* open house shared the importance of having access to peaceful and quiet places.

5.1.2 HOW CAN EXISTING QRD PARKS AND TRAILS BE IMPROVED? IS ANYTHING MISSING?

Key themes that emerged from input received at all of the open houses included:

- More beach access points;

- Active transportation/cycling infrastructure;

- Public washrooms;

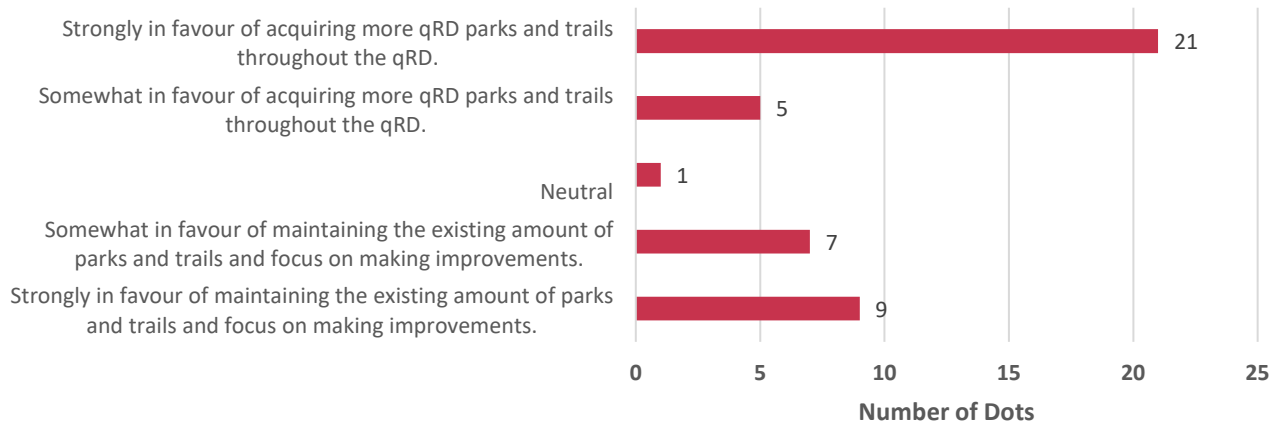- Improved signage; and

- More parks and trails.

Participants at the *North of Town* open house emphasized community driven amenities and local events in parks, and those at the *City of Powell River* and *South of Town* open houses expressed the importance of education on trail etiquette and expanding active transportation infrastructure. There was also significant support for a disc golf course near Myrtle Point. Participants at the *Texada Island* open house voiced their desire for a dog park and to improve accessibility to Sanderson Trail. Attendees at the *Savary Island* open house placed emphasis on public beach access and support from the qRD in stabilizing shorelines and providing safe beach access in steep locations. Those at the *Lasqueti Island* open house also placed significant emphasis on public beach access and adding additional parks and trails on the island.
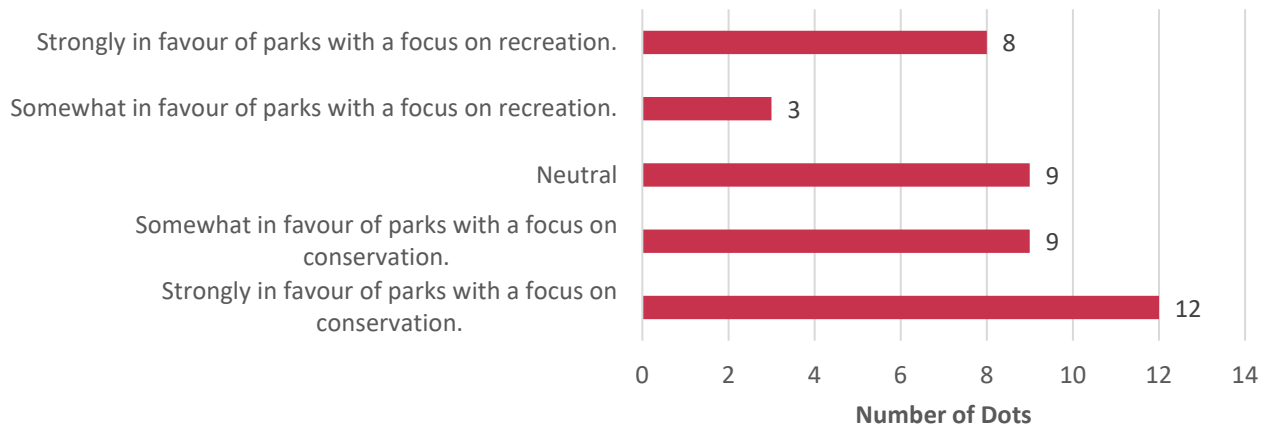
PE ARCHITECTS + PLANNERS

5.1.3 PLACE A DOT ON THE SCALES BELOW TO INDICATE WHAT YOU THINK IS MOST IMPORTANT.

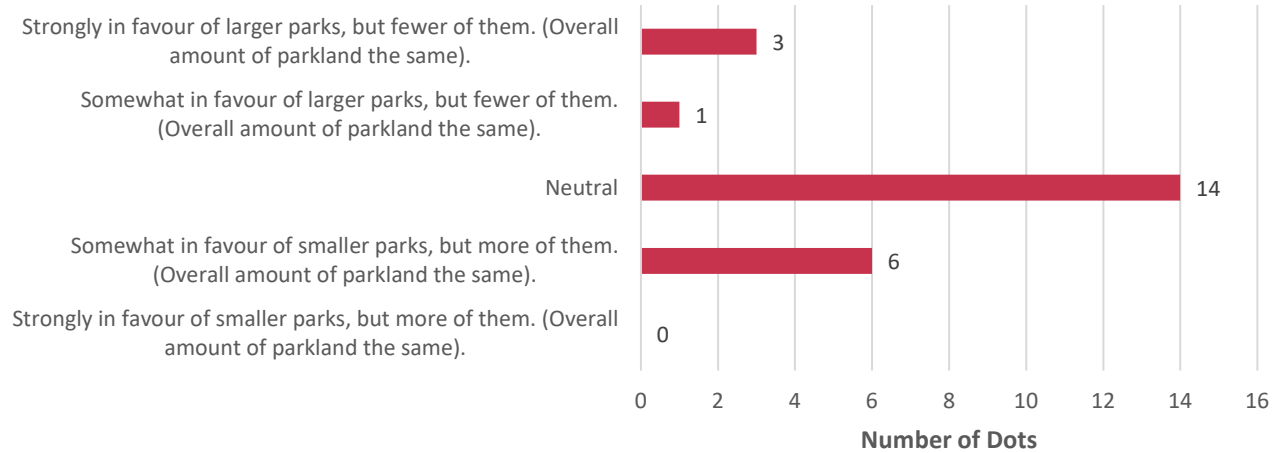Open house attendees indicated their priorities for regional parks and trails:
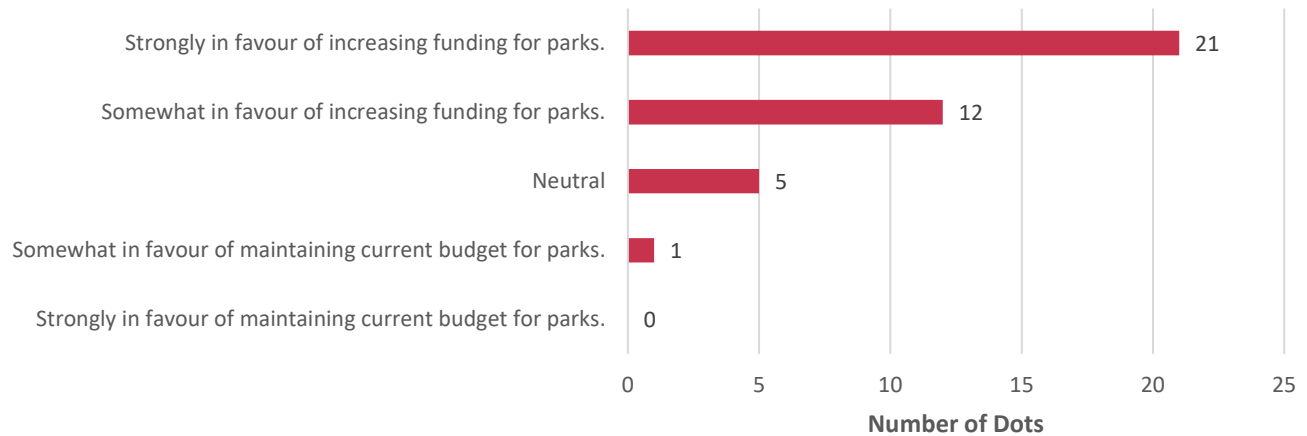
Parks and Trails

	Number of Dots
Strongly in favour of acquiring more qRD parks and trails throughout the qRD.	21
Somewhat in favour of acquiring more qRD parks and trails throughout the qRD.	5
Neutral	1
Somewhat in favour of maintaining the existing amount of parks and trails and focus on making improvements.	7
Strongly in favour of maintaining the existing amount of parks and trails and focus on making improvements.	9

Parkland Use

	Number of Dots
Strongly in favour of parks with a focus on recreation.	8
Somewhat in favour of parks with a focus on recreation.	3
Neutral	9
Somewhat in favour of parks with a focus on conservation.	9
Strongly in favour of parks with a focus on conservation.	12

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Park Size

Category	Value
Strongly in favour of larger parks, but fewer of them. (Overall amount of parkland the same).	3
Somewhat in favour of larger parks, but fewer of them. (Overall amount of parkland the same).	1
Neutral	14
Somewhat in favour of smaller parks, but more of them. (Overall amount of parkland the same).	6
Strongly in favour of smaller parks, but more of them. (Overall amount of parkland the same).	0

Number of Dots

Park Budget

Category	Value
Strongly in favour of increasing funding for parks.	21
Somewhat in favour of increasing funding for parks.	12
Neutral	5
Somewhat in favour of maintaining current budget for parks.	1
Strongly in favour of maintaining current budget for parks.	0

Number of Dots

The majority of open house participants were supportive of acquiring more parks and trails throughout the qRD and there was also strong support for increasing funding for parks. There was preference for focusing on conservation and preservation of natural areas rather than having parks for active recreation. Participants from the *South of Town and City of Powell River* open houses placed a higher emphasis on increasing funding for parks. Attendees at the *Texada Island* open house expressed the importance of conservation and preservation of natural areas.

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5.1.4 WHAT WORDS BEST REFLECT YOUR VISION FOR THE FUTURE OF QRD PARKS & TRAILS?

Key themes that emerged from input received at all of the open houses included:

- Waterfront access;

- Inclusive and accessible parks and trails;

- Keeping parks wild and undeveloped;

- Preserving and expanding biodiversity in parks and trails;

- Community involvement with qRD support;

- Expanding active transportation networks;

- Multi-use trails and parks;

- Well maintained parks and trails;

- Preserving views;

- Equestrian friendly parks and parking;

- Recreation opportunities; and

- Education.

Participants at the *North of Town* open house placed a higher emphasis on community driven initiatives, and those at the *City of Powell River* session communicated the importance of conserving old growth forests. There was significant support for acquiring Stillwater Bluffs as a park from participants at the *South of Town* workshop. Attendees at the *Savary Island* open house placed emphasis on adding a public washroom on Savary Island and adding a beach access trail at Mermaid Beach. Those at the *Lasqueti Island* open house also placed significant emphasis on public beach access and adding additional parks and trails on the island.

5.1.5 WHERE WOULD YOU LIKE TO SEE NEW QRD PARKS AND TRAILS IN THE FUTURE?

The most frequently mentioned locations from participants overall included:
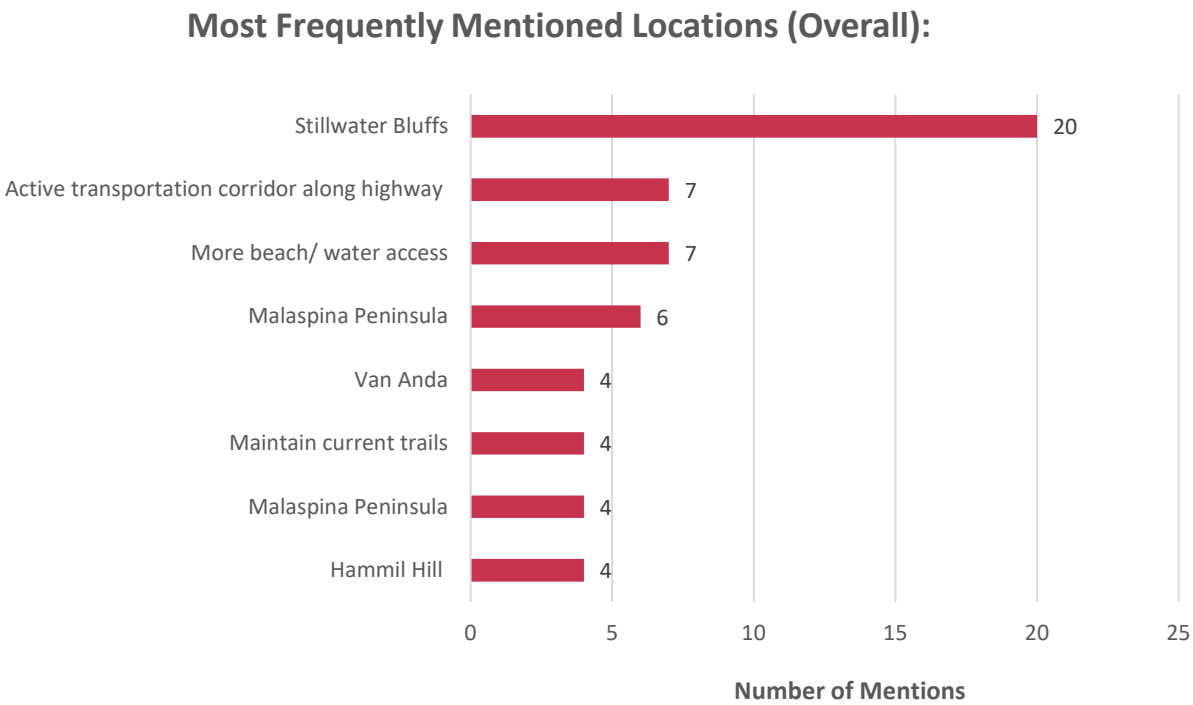
Most Frequently Mentioned Locations (Overall):

The most frequently mentioned locations from participants at the *North of Town* open house included:

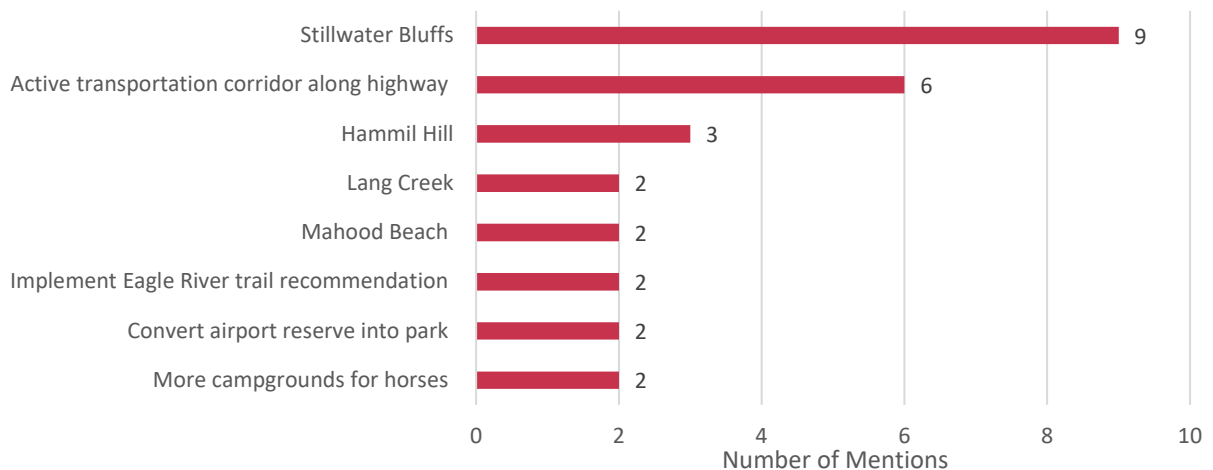## Most Frequently Mentioned Locations (North of Town):

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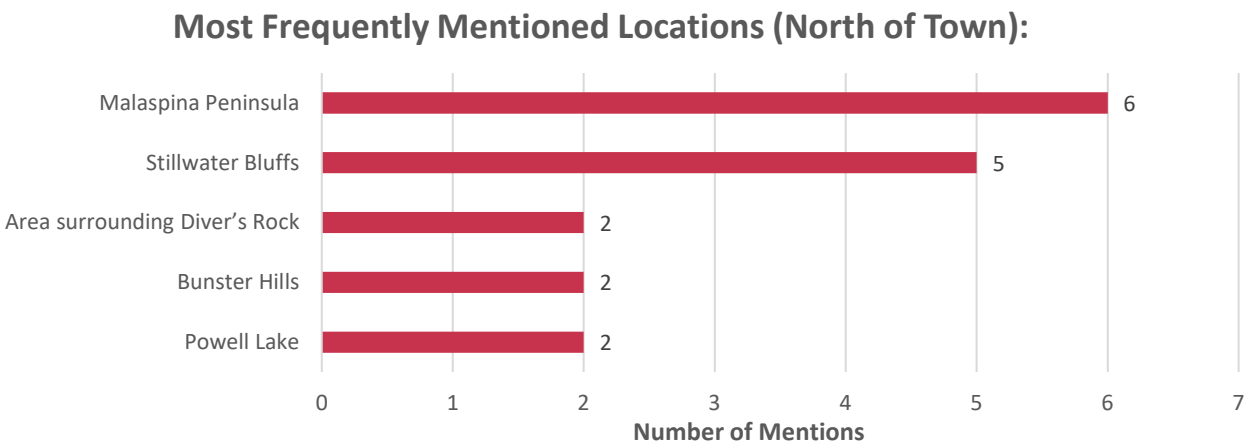
Other locations that were mentioned at the *North of Town* open house included:

- Heisholt Lake

- Orpana Lakes

- More beach accesses

- Connect Copeland Islands Marine Provincial Park and Desolation Sound Marine Provincial Park

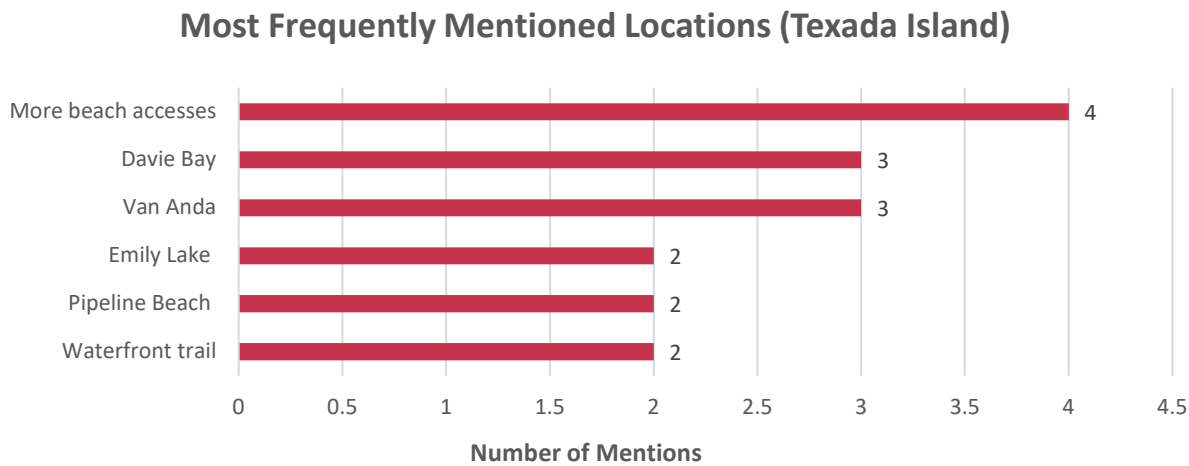The most frequently mentioned locations from participants at the *South of Town* open house included:

Most Frequently Mentioned Locations (South of Town)

Location	Number of Mentions
Stillwater Bluffs	9
Active transportation corridor along highway	6
Hammil Hill	3
Lang Creek	2
Mahood Beach	2
Implement Eagle River trail recommendation	2
Convert airport reserve into park	2
More campgrounds for horses	2

Other locations that were mentioned at the *South of Town* open house included:

- Mount Mahoney

- Lake Bluffs

- Back country ski access

- Improve the Pole Line Trail between Zilinsky Road and Serendipity Road

- Make the Pole Line Trail a designated trail like the Trans Canada Trail

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The most frequently mentioned locations from participants at the *Texada Island* open house included:

Most Frequently Mentioned Locations (Texada Island)

Other locations that were mentioned at the *Texada Island* open house included:

- Active transportation corridor along highway
- Access agreements with private property owners
- Trail from school/ library through to Beach Avenue
- End of Sanderson Road by TV tower
- Heisholt Lake

The most frequently mentioned locations from participants at the City of Powell River open house included:

Most Frequently Mentioned Locations (City of Powell River)

PE ARCHITECTS + PLANNERS
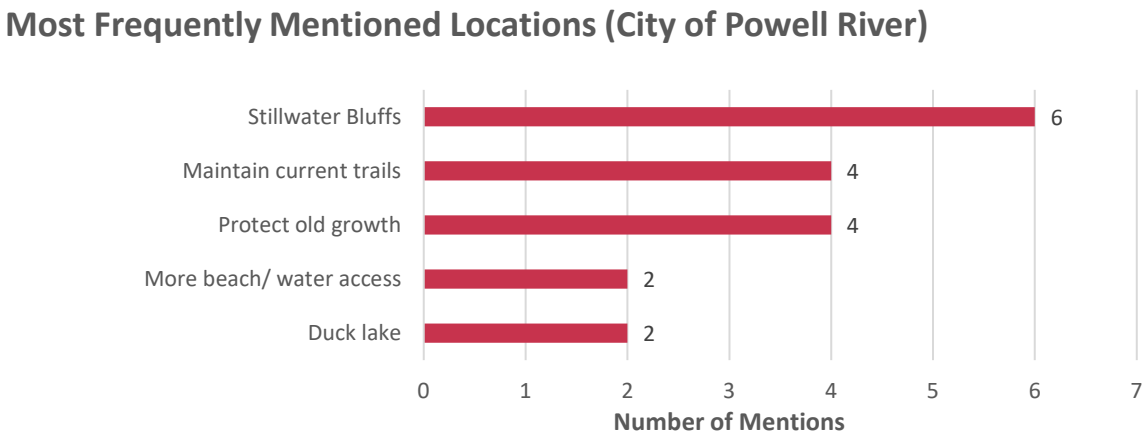
Other locations that were mentioned at the *City of Powell River* open house included:

- Better trail connections to downtown/ other communities
- Reroute Sunshine Coast Trail along Mosaic Forest Management's waterfront and southern property boundary
- Eldred Valley
- Islands at the north end of Haslam
- Scotch Fir Point
- Hammil Hill
- Gallagher Hill
- Van Anda

The locations mentioned by participants at the *Savary Island* open house included:

- South Beach Trail
- Beach access trails

The locations mentioned by participants at the *Lasqueti Island* open house included:

- A waterfront park
- A multi-use trail the length of Lasqueti Island
- Beach access trails on MOTI land
- Crown land

5.1.6 HOW COULD ACCESSIBILITY IN QRD PARKS AND TRAILS BE IMPROVED (FOR THE ELDERLY OR THOSE WITH MOBILITY CHALLENGES, FOR EXAMPLE)?

Key themes that emerged from input received at all of the open houses included:

- Improving access to parks and trails for those with mobility challenges;

- Improving trail maintenance;

- Increased parking at parks and trails;

- Adding washrooms at parks and trails; and

- Improving signage.

Participants at the *North of Town open* house placed a higher emphasis on providing programming/infrastructure in parks for people with disabilities. There were several comments in support of increasing parking at beach access trails at the *City of Powell River* session as well as providing larger parking areas for horse trailers. There was significant support for improving safety and accessibility for cyclists along the highway from participants at the *South of Town* workshop. Attendees at the *Texada Island* open house expressed support for improved signage at parks and trails and those at the *Savary Island* open house placed emphasis on improving accessibility to beaches.

Specific comments from each of the open houses are listed below.

North of Town Open House:

- Wheelchair accessible trails that are regularly maintained (2)

- Transit, ferries or water taxis that are accessible (2)

- Wheelchair access to waterfront and beaches (2)

- Collaborate and organize programs for people with mobility or developmental needs (2)

- Accessible parking

South of Town Open House:

- Multi-use trails along the highway (2)

- Repair bridge at Inland Lake so it is wheelchair accessible (2)

- Public washrooms on Savary Island (2)

- Improve access to beaches

City of Powell River Open House:

- Parking spaces (2)

- Parking for horse trailers (2)

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- Additional trail maintenance

- Accessible bridges

- Cycling routes

- Washrooms

- Consider the surface materials for trails (gravel can be difficult for wheelchair access, but is preferred for riding horses)

Texada Island Open House:

- Additional signage (3)

- Additional trail maintenance and improved accessibility (3)

- More seating along trails (2)

- Improve beach access, access from the road and parking

- Add stairs where access is steep

Lasqueti Island Open House:

- Provide accessible trails to parks and natural features

Savary Island Open House:

- Improve access to beaches (including at South Beach, Sutherland Beach and Mermaid Beach)

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5.1.7 WHAT ELSE DO WE NEED TO KNOW? SHARE YOUR IDEAS HERE….

Key themes that emerged from input received at all of the open houses included:

- Continue to allow volunteer/community groups to maintain trails but provide more support;

- Improve access to backcountry recreation areas;

- Develop active transportation corridors through the qRD; and

- Improve signage for beach access location, particularly on Savary and Lasqueti Islands.

Participants at the *North of Town* open house placed a higher emphasis on providing recreation and social opportunities for new and existing members of the community. Attendees at the *City of Powell River* open house stressed the importance of education on trail etiquette, keeping trails inclusive for multiple user groups, and more funding for park and trail maintenance. Participants at the *Savary Island* open house voiced support for increased spending on Savary Island, concern about the privatization of public beach accesses, and concern that qRD staff and consultants do not understand the issues on Savary Island. Those in attendance at the *Lasqueti Island* open house would like to see more amenities at Boot Point and Spring Bay, as well as signage for beach access points.

6 ADDITIONAL COMMUNITY FEEDBACK

Additional feedback from community members via email is summarized below:

Themes from community members across the qRD included:

- Continue to allow volunteer/community groups to maintain trails but provide more support;

- Support for improving access to backcountry recreation areas;

- Support for developing active transportation corridors through the qRD;

- Identify and expand the number of public beach access trails;

- Improve signage for current beach access locations, particularly on Savary and Lasqueti Islands;

- Concern regarding privatization of beach accesses and neighbouring properties removing signage to public areas;

- Concern for climate change;

- Need for long-term thinking about tourism and conservation;

- The importance of acquiring Stillwater Bluffs as a park; and

- Support for creating more trail networks, particularly on Lasqueti Island.

Themes from Lasqueti Island community feedback included:

- Support for a public dock at Scottie Bay;

- Support for adding a washroom at Spring Bay;

- Need for more support from the qRD to develop trails on Lasqeti Island;

- Lack of public access to the waterfront on Lasqeti Island;

- Concern about development of natural areas on Lasqueti Island;

- Steep accesses to beaches are a challenge;

- Support for more conservation, public greenspaces, and pedestrian-only trails; and

- Support for more co-management of parks on Crown land .

Themes from Savary Island community feedback included:

- Concern that Savary Island is used as a park by qRD residents but does not receive enough funding or support from the qRD to continue to function as such; and

- Concern that Savary Island residents contribute to parks funding but do not receive the same benefits as elsewhere within the qRD.

Themes from Texada Island community feedback included:

- Suggestions to beautify Sanderson Trail, replace signage and create a park-like setting along the trail.

Additional feedback from Knucklehead Winter Recreation Association:

- Knucklehead Winter Recreation Association (KWRA) members value current qRD funding and liability insurance.

- KWRA members suggest that the qRD:

  o Enter into a partnership agreement with Recreation Sites and Trails BC to build or operate backcountry trails;

  o Partner with volunteer groups to maintain trails on Crown land;

  o Work with KWRA to develop strategies in which qRD could support and assist with improving conditions of alpine recreation access roads;

  o Work with KWRA to develop strategies for the plowing of alpine recreation access roads in the future; and

  o Consider a similar model for developing a winter recreation area as Dakota Ridge on the Sunshine Coast. This is an example of a partnership between the qRD and a volunteer organization.

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APPENDIX F - ROUND 2 ENGAGEMENT SUMMARY

qathet Regional District

Parks and Trails Strategy

Round 2
What We Heard Report

Prepared for:

qathet
REGIONAL DISTRICT

Prepared by:

LEES
+
ASSOCIATES

Status: Final

June 2023

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1   INTRODUCTION

1.1   PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The qathet Regional District (qRD) is developing a Parks and Trails Strategy to guide the future direction for parks and trails owned and operated by the qRD.

Parks and trails are a vital asset to the community, providing valuable recreation opportunities that support the health and wellness of citizens. They ensure the public has access to all that nature has to offer while also protecting those resources for future generations.

The Strategy identifies key issues, challenges, and opportunities, establishes goals, and highlight actions that reflect the community's desires and aspirations for parks and trails. The Strategy will be used to establish priorities, identify desired locations for future parks and trails, guide decision-making and operations, and allocate resources over the next ten years. The Strategy is supported by community engagement and summarizes the community's desires and aspirations.

The Strategy builds on the successes of previous plans, including:

- The Parks and Greenspace Plan (2010);
- Parkland Acquisition Strategy (2015), and
- Regional Trails Plan (2016).

1.2   FIRST NATIONS ENGAGEMENT

LEES+Associates supported the qRD in engaging with the Tla'amin, Shishalh, Klahoose, Homalco, and K'omoks First Nations by writing referral letters inviting each of the nations to participate in community open houses and an online survey.

1.3   OVERALL PLANNING PROCESS

The Parks and Trails Strategy process includes the following five phases. This What We Heard Report summarizes feedback received during Phase 4 of the planning process, and the second round of community engagement.

2　ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY

2.1　PURPOSE OF ENGAGEMENT

The first round of engagement, which was held in November of 2022, asked about the community's values, priorities, and aspirations for qRD's parks and trails system. The feedback from the first round of engagement informed the Vision, Goals and Recommendations in the Draft Parks and Trails Strategy.

The purpose of the second round of engagement, which took place in May 2023, was to gauge support for the draft vision, goals, and recommendations and to confirm the community's priorities for future investment in the parks and trails system.

2.2　HOW WE REACHED OUT

Information about the project and how to get involved with engagement were included on the qRD's website. The qRD sent out emails inviting community members to take the online survey and attend the virtual open houses. The virtual open houses and survey were also advertised through local newspapers and social media including:

- Powell River Peak newspaper
- qathet Living magazine
- the qRD's Facebook page

2.3　ENGAGEMENT TOOLS

Round 2 community engagement included a public online survey and two online public open houses. The details of these activities are described below, and the results are summarized in this report.

2.3.1　ONLINE PUBLIC SURVEY

Input from the public was gathered through an online survey posted on the qRD's website. Survey responses were collected from May 16th to 30th, 2023 using the online platform Survey Monkey. There were 103 responses, and the results are summarized in Section 3.0 of this report.

2.3.2 COMMUNITY OPEN HOUSES

There were two online open houses held on May 16, 2023.

1. 1 to 2 p.m.
2. 7 to 8 p.m.

The open houses, held over Zoom, were a combination of live presentation on the Draft Parks and Trails Strategy, and live polling using the online application Mentimeter. This format allowed members of the community to gain an understanding of the Vision, Goals, and Recommendations included in the Draft Parks and Trails Strategy and provide feedback. Participants were asked to identify their priorities from the information presented and identify where more detail may be needed. Participants were also able to ask questions and share input directly with the consulting team and qRD staff.

The following questions were asked at the open houses:

- Where do you live?

- Which words from the vision statement resonate the most with you?

- Are there any words or ideas that are so important they should be added?

- What should be the focus of parkland acquisition?

- Which of the following beach access trail acquisition criteria should the qRD prioritize?

  o Beach access trails to areas with high recreational value

  o Beach access trails to areas with high wildlife viewing potential

  o Beach access trails that could easily be made accessible

- Do you have suggestions for how the qRD can improve the qRD Parks, Properties & Trails Volunteer Program?

- Are there opportunities for partnerships that we should include in the strategy?

- How important are the following improvements to parks and trails? Rank from 1, the highest, to 4, the lowest

  o Increasing monitoring and maintenance of parks and trails

  o Improving accessibility

  o Improving signage and interpretation

  o Improving support amenities

Engagement by the Numbers

- 103 participants in the online survey

- 35 participants in the community open houses

- Note: There were 370 online survey responses and 99 participants in the community open houses in the first round of engagement. It is common to see lower rates of participation in the second round of engagement as participants feel that they have voiced their feedback in the first round.

- How supportive are you of a multi-use path along the highway corridor?
- Now that we've described the five goals and you've seen the recommendations under each, please rank them in order of their importance to you.
  - Goal 1: Identify and acquire new regional parks and trails
  - Goal 2: Increase protection and management of natural areas
  - Goal 3: Strengthen community partnerships and volunteer resources
  - Goal 4: Enhance the user experience at parks and beach access trails
  - Goal 5: Support active transportation and a connected community
- Is there anything missing from the goals and recommendations overall?

Figure 1- Summary of the First Round of Engagement

3 PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT OUTCOMES

OVERVIEW OF ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITIES AND RESULTS

COMMUNITY VALUES

In the first round of engagement, four top community values were identified: Water Access, Connect to Nature, Protect Nature, Recreation. These remained core values in the second round of engagement, with the important addition of:

Community Involvement

- Volunteer trail-building and maintenance groups, and groups centred around recreational activities like motorsports and horse-riding, expressed a desire to be a part of the future of parks and trails in the qRD.

Accessibility

- There was strong support for a welcoming parks and trails system that prioritizes accessibility for those with mobility challenges, equitable access, and support for multiple types of trail usage.

KEY ISSUES AND OPPORTUNITIES

The following are the key issues and opportunities that emerged from the second round of engagement.

More Focus on Environmental Protection

- Survey respondents and open house attendees were very supportive of aspects of the Vision Statement and Goals that focused on the protection of ecologically sensitive areas.

Community Collaboration

- Many members of the public highlighted the vital work done historically and currently by volunteer groups and recreational groups to build trails. There was strong support for finding ways to collaborate with these groups for future trail building and maintenance activities.

Accessibility and Shared Use

- Accessibility remained a top concern, not only in building new trails and parks but as something to keep top-of-mind in maintaining and improving current trails and parks. To the qRD community, accessibility means access for those with mobility limitations, access to recreation for all people in all areas, and access for many types of recreational user groups.

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4   ONLINE SURVEY – SUMMARY OF RESULTS

Key findings from the online survey:

- Most respondents strongly agreed with the Vision Statement, though many were supportive of more emphasis on environmental protection, accessibility and connectivity, public and Indigenous involvement, and sustained government support for volunteers.

- There was strong support for the Goals included in Draft Strategy, with suggestions to enhance focus on recreation for families with young children, accessibility for those with mobility challenges, and some questions over the Goals' clarity and prioritization.

- Parkland acquisition priorities should focus on environmental protection and places with high recreational use but not publicly owned. Specifically, Stillwater Bluffs was repeatedly brought up as an acquisition target.

- Beach Access Trail acquisition should focus on sites with high recreational value, high ecological value, current limited access, and places that could be reasonably maintained by the qRD.

- The Parks, Properties & Trails Volunteer Program needs more promotion and could benefit from collaboration and coordination with other groups.

- A multi-use pathway along the highway received strong support from survey respondents, though there is recognition of its complexity and many suggestions on how to approach this initiative.

- Texada Island needs safe active transportation infrastructure.

- The equestrian community expressed its need to maintain access to trails as well as involvement in trail-building and maintenance.

Q1. To what extent do you agree with the Vision Statement? Almost all respondents agreed with the Draft Strategy's Vision, with 93% of respondents either agreeing or strongly agreeing.
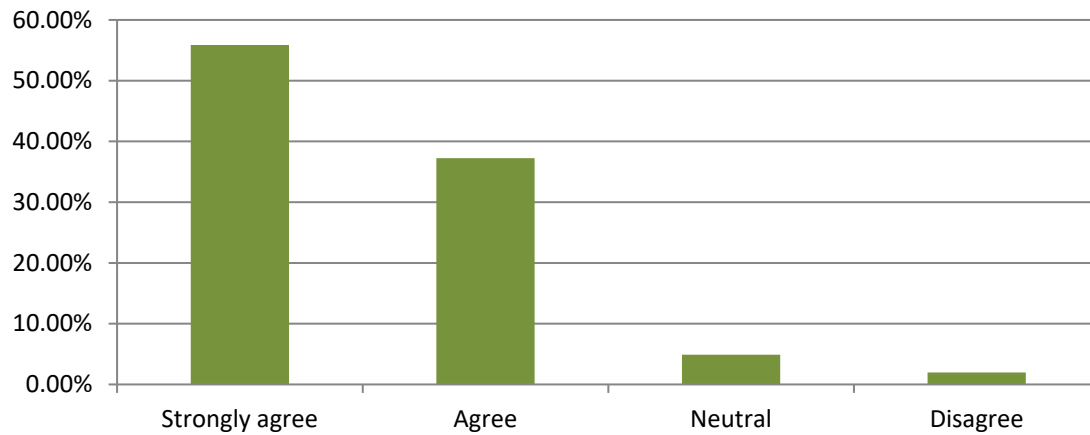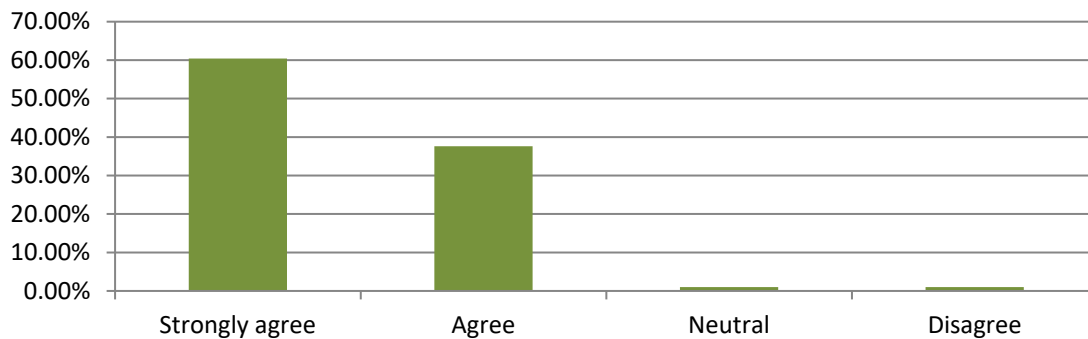

Q2. Is there anything missing from the Vision Statement? Of the 46 who answered this open-ended question, 7 respondents expressed that the statement was complete and sufficient as-is. Additional comments are summarized in themes below:

- **Environmental protection and rehabilitation**
  - Recognize the importance of old growth and mature trees, biodiversity, and climate change mitigation.
  - Focusing on waterfront access is important, but forest ecosystems are missing from the vision.
  - Protecting ecologically significant areas and restricting access.
  - Sustainability should be mentioned, even as adverb – i.e. "sustainably preserves."
  - Limit development on waterfront/ leave the waterfront as natural.
- **Accessibility and connectivity**
  - Connections between trails allows for better access as well as wildlife corridors.
  - Ensure parks and trails are inclusive and accessible for all.
  - Ensure trails are multi-use and support active transportation.
  - Trails that are inclusive of the equestrian community.
  - Parks should be accessible by transit.
- **Vision Statement wording**
  - Integrate more action-oriented wording, including using "initiative" over "system" to promote action.

- o Clarify the difference between "waterfront" and "beaches", and how do lakes fit in?

- ▪ **Stakeholder and public involvement**

  - o Support for stewardship by and co-management with Indigenous peoples.

  - o Include mention of public support for the protection/enhancement of parks and natural areas for future generations.

- ▪ **Governance**

  - o Ensure sufficient resources are allocated to execute the Vision.

  - o Protecting biodiversity should be a goal for all levels of government.

Q3. To what extent do you agree with the Goals? Almost all respondents agreed with the Draft Strategy's Goals, with 98% of respondents either agreeing or strongly agreeing.


Q4. Is there anything missing from the Goals? Of the 36 who answered, 6 expressed that the Goals needed no additions. Other suggestions and comments are summarized below:

- ▪ Ensure that Goals, such as enhancing user experience and increased management, do not work against the protection of natural areas.

- ▪ Manage and regulate trail use, as some types of usage are inappropriate for certain trails.

- ▪ Connect and link parks, trails, and natural areas.

- ▪ Under Goal 4, there is no explicit mention of enhancing use for families with young children. There is a lack of play equipment for ages under 5 outside municipal areas.

- ▪ Goal 5 should focus on accessibility for those with mobility challenges, including those in wheelchairs.

- ▪ Under Goal 5, prioritize creating a safe connections for non-motorized vehicles and walking between Tla'amin lands and Lund.

- Maintenance and ongoing care of existing and future areas should include minimum performance standards and maintenance activities should be coordinated with the local community groups that have helped establish recreational areas in this region.

- Accountability for meeting the Goals should be a part of this planning process, including reporting and communicating progress to the public.

- Coordinate zoning of parks in Official Community Plans.

- Consider usage by the horse-riding community.

- Clarify the wording in Goals 3 and 5.

- Some concerns over whether goals are listed in order of priority, and issues with that perceived ordering.

Q5. Which of the following parkland acquisition criteria should the qRD prioritize? Please select your top 5. The four highest priorities for respondents were sites that have key habitats/wildlife corridors (62%), sites with sensitive ecosystems (62%), level of threat from development (54%), and sites with unique/significant landscape features (54%). Full category wording, in order from left to right, is below the chart.
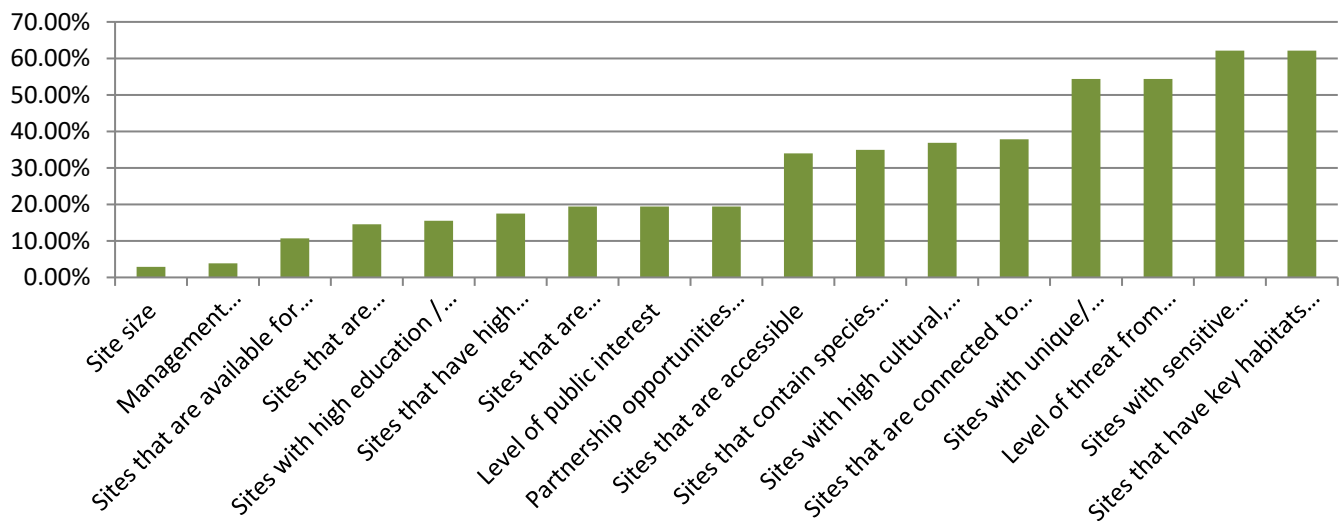
Site size
Management considerations (such as level of service)
Sites that are available for acquisition
Sites that are complementary to planning initiatives
Sites with high education / research value
Sites that have high climate change mitigation potential
Sites that are complementary to the parks system
Level of public interest
Partnership opportunities with other qRD planning and conservation initiatives

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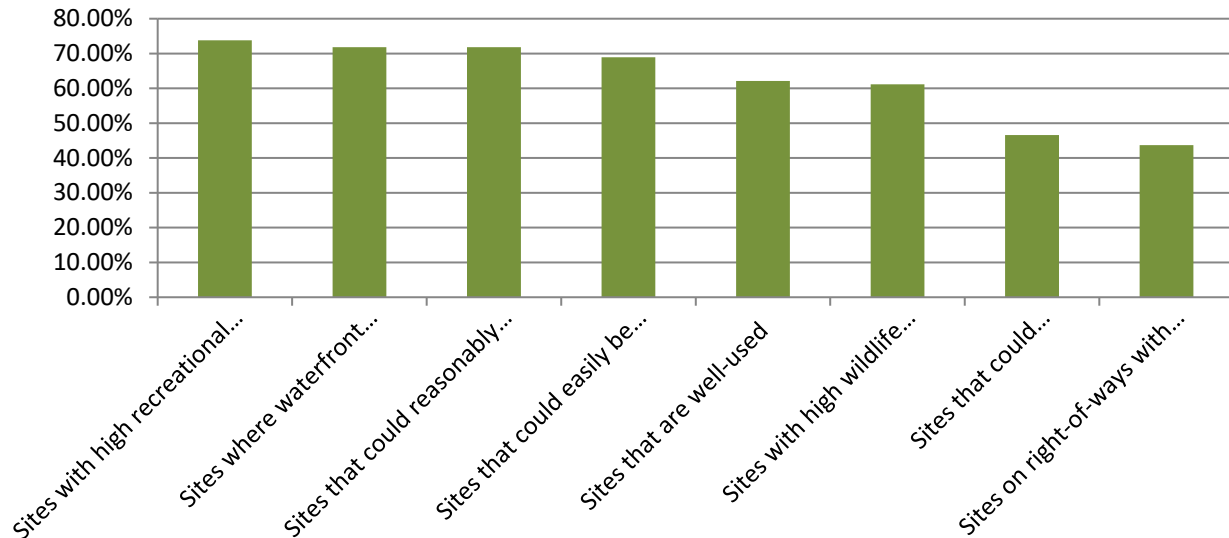
Sites that are accessible
Sites that contain species at risk
Sites with high cultural, historic, or heritage value
Sites that are connected to other parks and trails
Sites with unique/ significant landscape features
Level of threat from development
Sites with sensitive ecosystems / high levels of biodiversity
Sites that have key habitats / wildlife corridors

Q6. Is there anything missing from the list of parkland acquisition criteria? Of the 29 who answered, 5 stated that nothing was missing from the parkland acquisition criteria. Other suggestions/ comments are summarized below:

- Repeated mentions of the need to acquire and protect Stillwater Bluffs, for both its ecological and recreational value.

- Protect of old growth forests.

- Protect sites that have water access or have an effect on the health of waterbodies.

- Sites with high recreational value, including for specific user groups such as families, the motorsports community, the biking community, and the equestrian community.

- Sites not owned by the qRD, province, or Crown land but with established recreational use.

- Differentiate between sites acquired for parkland and sites acquired to be protected and not used by the public.

- Sites with value as wildlife corridors.

- Sites with ecological value that will not be protected by other legislative means.

Q7. Which of the following beach access trail acquisition criteria should the qRD prioritize? *Please select your top 5.* When asked which five beach access trail acquisition criteria the qRD should prioritize, respondents favoured sites with high recreational value (74%), where access is currently limited (72%), and sites that could reasonably be maintained by the qRD (72%). Full category wording, in order from left to right, is below the chart.

Sites with high recreational value
Sites where waterfront access is limited
Sites that could reasonably be maintained by the qRD
Sites that could easily be made accessible
Sites that are well-used
Sites with high wildlife viewing potential
Sites that could accommodate support amenities such as parking or washrooms
Sites on right-of-ways with good roads, no gates or development

Q8. Is there anything missing from the list of beach access trail acquisition criteria? Of the 27 that answered, 5 expressed that they had nothing to add to the beach access trail acquisition. Other suggestions/ comments are summarized below:

▪ Stillwater Bluffs was mentioned multiple times as an acquisition target.

▪ Reassess sites that have been considered by the regional district under previous planning initiatives.

▪ Protect of aquatic flora.

▪ Concern that "sites that could be reasonably maintained by the qRD" will become an excuse to not explore multiple options for certain sites.

▪ Sites with potential for educational opportunities, beach-combing, and estuary-viewing.

▪ Sites with opportunities for camping.

▪ Negotiate access through private lands to established recreational locations.

▪ Related but not acquisition criteria:

o   Improve existing beach access trails, including wider pathways and parking.

o   Recognize and respect clothing-optional beach areas.

o   Concern with considering parking an amenity.

o   Concern regarding any development of natural spaces.

o   Need for garbage bins along trails.

o   Improve signage with information about accessibility.

Q9. What is your level of support for the development of management plans to protect important habitats and ecosystems? Almost all respondents were either very supportive (82%) or somewhat supportive (12%) of developing management plans to protect important habitats and ecosystems.
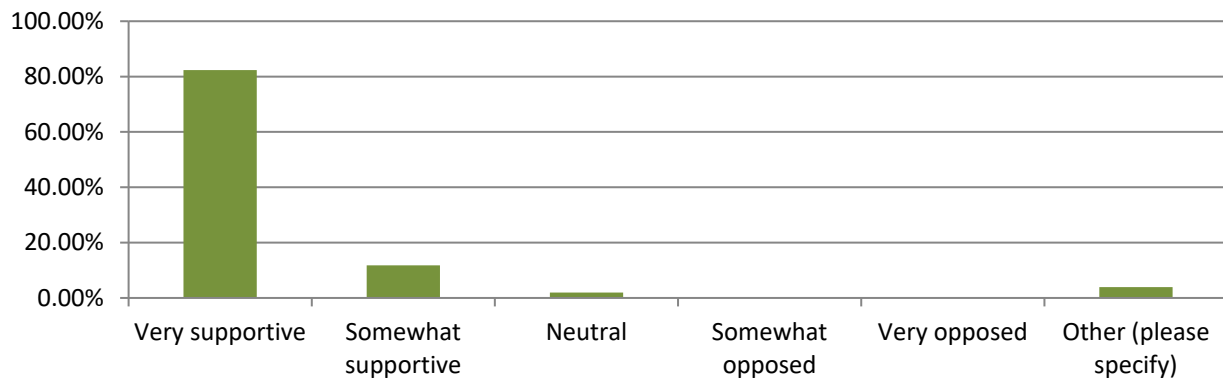
Other responses included:
- "I am very SUPPORTIVE, however I found the opportunity lacking any boxes for Recommendations 2.1 and 2.2 that would have given some depth and nuances. As it stands this is rather general and limited."
- "In particular areas like Stillwater Bluffs, Lang Creek, salmon streams, etc."
- "I would really love to see Stillwater Bluffs protected as a PARK."
- "Very supportive... leave nature alone, human concepts of development are just that, development, leave nature ALONE!"

Q10. Do you have any specific suggestions on how the qRD can support protecting nature in regional parks and trails? Of the 49 responses, 3 indicated that they did not have any suggestions for how the qRD could support protecting nature in regional parks and trails. Other suggestions are summarized below:

- **Limit Access and Development**

    o Introduce new categories of parks, such as preserves or reserves, and limit access and development.

    o Manage types of access in parks such as pedestrian/hiker use only areas, no motorized vehicles areas, and areas where dogs are not allowed.

    o No disc golf in environmentally sensitive areas.

    o More staff to patrol areas and enforce restrictions on usage.

- **Protection of specific natural areas**

    o Protect Stillwater Bluffs.

    o Protect green spaces in Powell River.

- **Logging and old growth forests**

    o Protect old growth forests from logging and development.

    o Protect linkages between old growth ecosystems.

    o Create larger buffer zones around old growth forests and the Sunshine Coast Trail.

- **Information, education, and awareness**

    o Develop an online monitoring/reporting system on which the public can provide updates about park conditions.

    o Incorporate informational signs about ecosystems and wildlife, why an area is protected, the value of land kept protected in a natural state, site histories, and bear awareness.

    o Education over regulation.

    o Partner with schools and create educational programs to minimize the impact on ecologically sensitive areas while exposing youth to nature.

- **Partnerships**

    o Partner with Indigenous communities for, or ask them to lead, educational campaigns.

    o Facilitate access for Indigenous communities and encourage revitalization of traditional land stewardship practices, supported by Traditional Knowledge.

   o Partner with existing volunteer groups for maintenance of parks and trails.

- **Conservation and preservation**

    o Acquire sites to protect them and then leave them alone.

    o Ensure coordination with federal, provincial, and regional park plans.

    o Manage and eradicate invasive species on an ongoing basis.

- o   Lease Crown land for recreational uses.
- o   Engage other organizations to support preservation and conservation, such as UNESCO's Biosphere Reserve program and post-secondary educational institutions.

Q11. How satisfied are you with the Parks, Properties & Trails Volunteer Program? Most respondents were not familiar with the qRD's Parks, Properties & Trails Volunteer Program. Of those that are familiar with the program, 38% were satisfied with the program and 11% extremely satisfied.
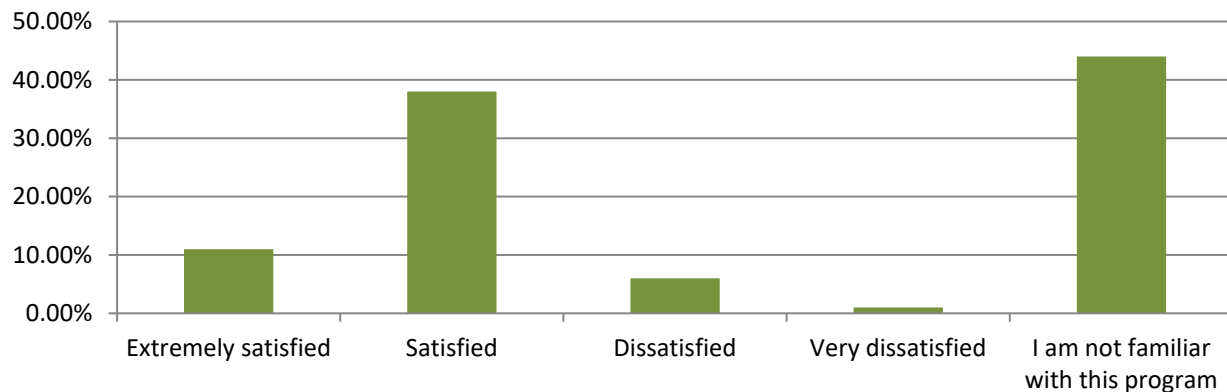
Q12. Do you have any specific suggestions on how the qRD can improve the Parks, Properties & Trails Volunteer Program? Of the 38 who answered this question, 2 stated they had no feedback. Other suggestions are summarized below:

- ▪   Promotion and awareness
    - o   There were several statements about the lack awareness/visibility of this program, and a need was identified for it to be better publicized and that advertising for this program should promote its benefits.
    - o   Issues receiving responses when contacting the qRD for information about program.
    - o   Respondents who stated they were unaware of the program indicated that they were happy it exists.

- ▪   Support and resources
    - o   Volunteers need adequate support.
    - o   Provide adequate funding for the program.
    - o   Expand the program to include more maintenance.
    - o   Speed up the approval process for involvement in the program
    - o   Create flexible opportunities for involvement in the program, such as being a less frequent or one-time volunteer.
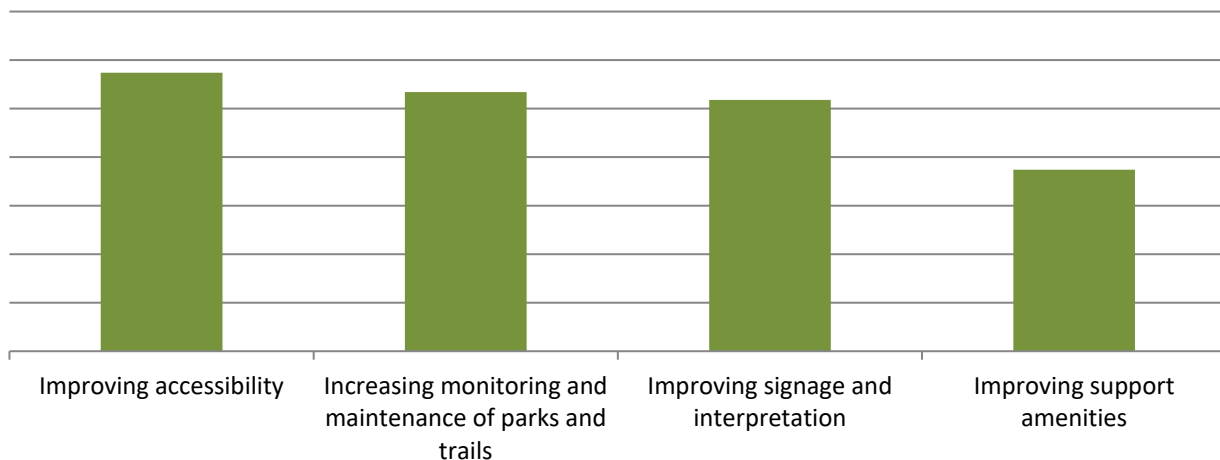
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- ▪ Collaboration and engagement
  - o Acknowledge and support other volunteer groups – such as the qathet Regional Cycling Association, the BOMB Squad, and the Powell River Parks and Wilderness Society – for their work on parks and trails.
  - o Create a forum to coordinate maintenance work between qRD program and external volunteer groups.
  - o Engage school trustees and other community groups.
  - o Invite participation from horse clubs to participate in maintenance and building activities.
  - o Involve high school community-service programs.
  - o Engage public to support volunteers in events such as post-storm clean-up.
- ▪ Trail maintenance and user considerations
  - o Ensure trails are maintained for all types of users, with an emphasis on accessibility.

Q13. How important are the following improvements to parks and trails? Please rank how important the following actions are to you from highest importance (1) to lowest (4). While respondents were supportive of all categories, most respondents slightly favoured improving accessibility as the most important improvement to make to parks and trails.

| Improving accessibility | Increasing monitoring and maintenance of parks and trails | Improving signage and interpretation | Improving support amenities |

Q14. Are you supportive of the qRD exploring the feasibility of creating a multi-use path along the highway corridor to support increased walking and cycling for people of all ages and abilities in our community? Of survey respondents, 71% were very supportive of a multi-use path along the highway corridor.
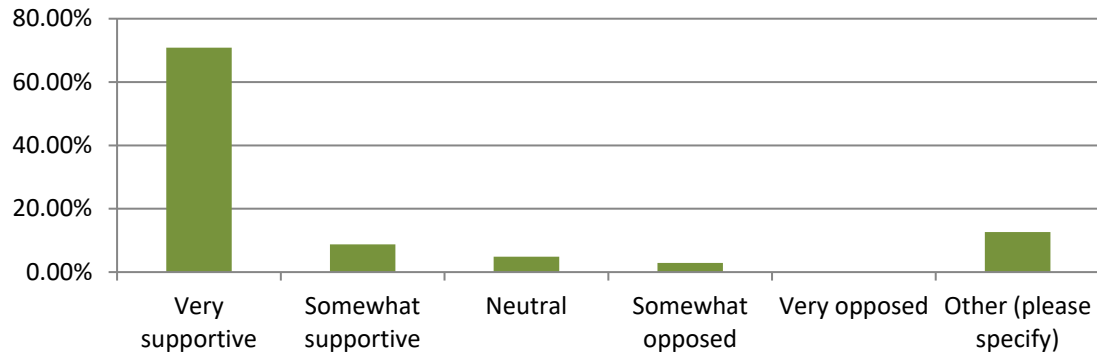
Other responses included:

- If highway option is not feasible, look at other possibilities to continue the path in certain sections.

- Support for a multi-use path where there is population to justify it or areas of high use.

- Develop a safe multi-use trail on Texada Island as it is currently dangerous to bike there.

- Consider working with Indigenous communities to develop the multi-use path. Refer to ʔapsčiik ƛašii Pathway in Tofino as an example.

- Trails must be linked, even through private property such as those owned by forestry companies.

Q15. **Where do you live?** Most respondents (46%) were from the City of Powell River. Following this, 20% were from Electoral Area C, 14% from Electoral Area B, and 12% from Electoral Area A. There was some representation from all other areas mentioned, except Sechelt Indian Government District Land. Two respondents, under Other, specified that they were outside the qRD.
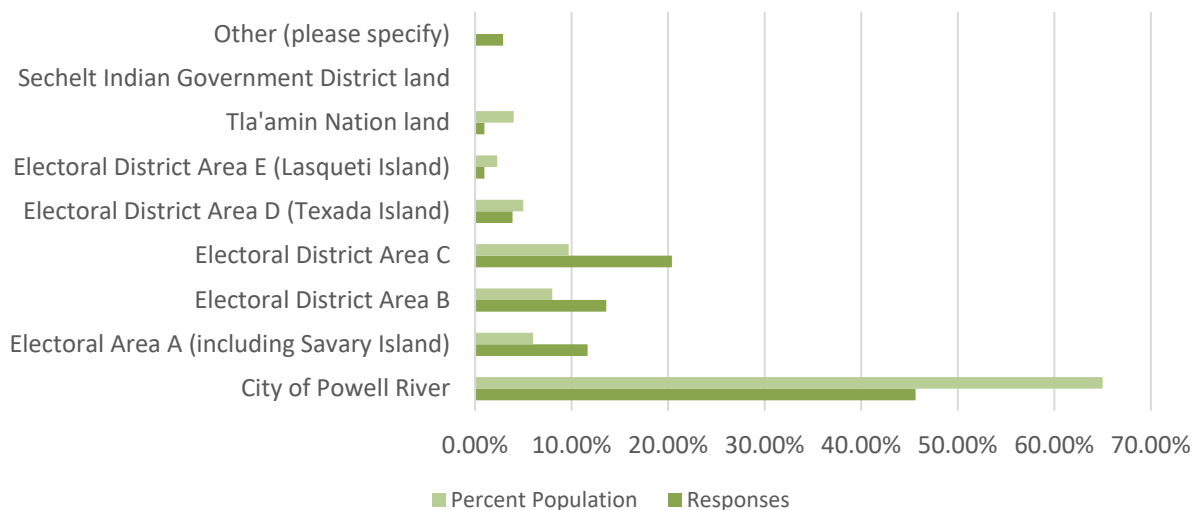
Q16. How did you hear about the Parks and Trails Strategy? *Please select all that apply.* Most respondents found out about the Strategy via email (33%) and Facebook (32%), with word of mouth (24%) and printed ads (18%) being the next most significant categories.
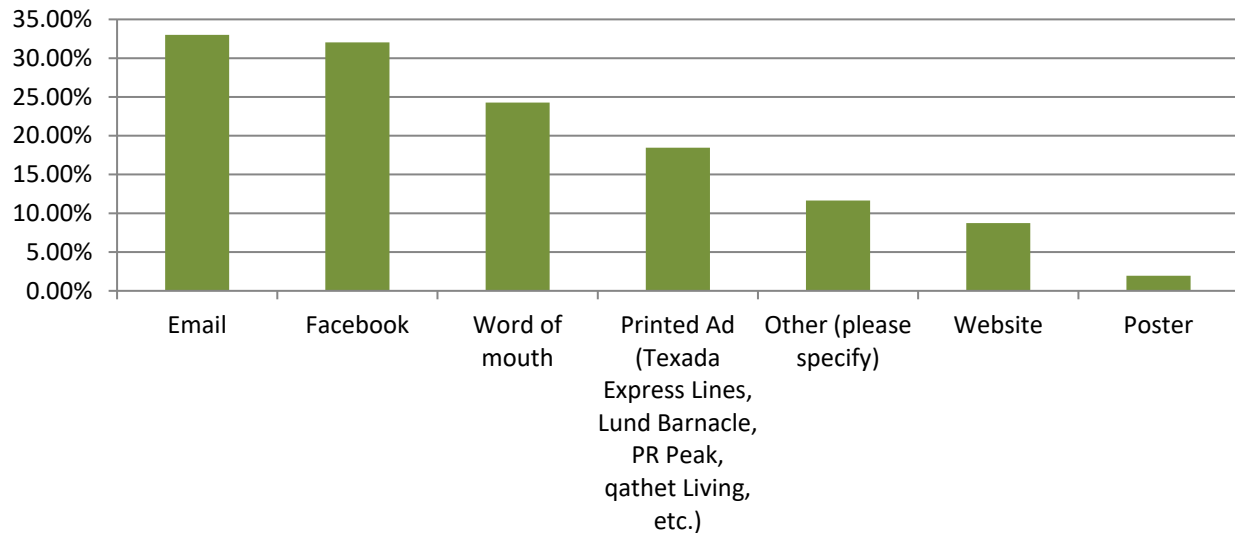
Other ways in which respondents heard about the Strategy:

- Back Country Horsemen of BC
- Friends of Stillwater Bluffs
- Malaspina Naturalist Club
- Peak
- Local conservation group email list
- Powell River Trail Riders

5 COMMUNITY OPEN HOUSES – KEY THEMES

During the open houses, participants were asked to share their thoughts about the Draft Parks and Trails Strategy's Vision and its Goals.

Most attendees were from the City of Powell River and Electoral Area A, with some representation from Electoral Area C and D.

Throughout the open houses, attendees were asked to participate in a live polling exercise using the online application Mentimeter. Mentimeter allowed participants to provide feedback on the Draft Vision, Goals and Recommendations in real time. The Mentimeter panels are included below.

POLL 1: WHICH WORDS FROM THE VISION STATEMENT RESONATE THE MOST WITH YOU?

As more participants select the same words, these are displayed larger and more prominently.

1-2pm   7-8pm

POLL 2: ARE THERE ANY WORDS OR IDEAS THAT ARE SO IMPORTANT THEY SHOULD BE ADDED?

As more participants select the same words, these are displayed larger and more prominently.

1-2pm   7-8pm

POLL 3: WHAT SHOULD BE THE FOCUS OF PARKLAND ACQUISITION?

Written suggestions from both open houses are summarized below:

- Prioritize protecting ecosystems.
- Acquire Stillwater Bluffs as a park or protected area.
- Partner with large companies to fund parks in exchange for naming rights.
- Sites with wildlife viewing opportunities.
- Prioritize sites with beach access.
- Prioritize sites with accessible trails.
- Prioritize multi-use areas, including for motorsports and horse riders.
- Prioritize sites with winter recreation opportunities.
- Prioritize sites with educational opportunities.

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POLL 4: WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING BEACH ACCESS TRAIL ACQUISITION CRITERIA SHOULD THE qRD PRIORITIZE?

The top-ranked choices were tied across both houses:

- Beach access trails that could easily be made accessible. (5)
- Beach access trails to areas with high recreational value. (5)
- Beach access trails to areas with high wildlife viewing potential. (1)

POLL 5: DO YOU HAVE ANY SUGGESTIONS FOR HOW THE qRD CAN IMPROVE THE qRD PARKS, PROPERTIES & TRAILS VOLUNTEER PROGRAM?

Written suggestions from both open houses are summarized below:

- Support both this program and other community volunteer groups.
- Collaborate with other community volunteer groups.
- Consider partnering with tourism industry to communicate volunteer opportunities.
- Coordinate with BC Parks to remedy trails around Inland Lake and MoTI on Savary Island.
- Ensure representation from all areas of the region.
- Promote the program in schools.
- Support community funding partnerships.

POLL 6: ARE THERE OPPORTUNITIES FOR PARTNERSHIPS THAT WE SHOULD INCLUDE IN THE STRATEGY?
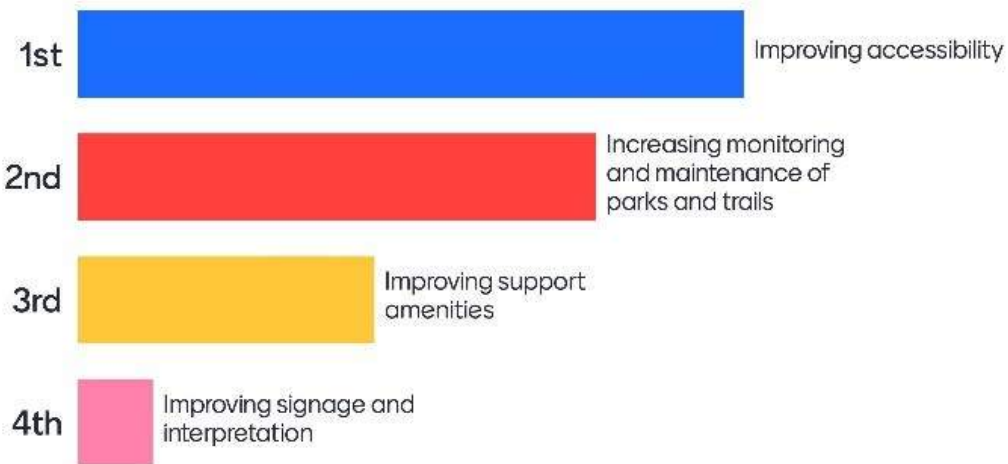
Written suggestions from both open houses are summarized below:

- Partner with other levels of government, such as the ministries of transportation and parks.
- Powell River ATV Club and trail maintenance groups.
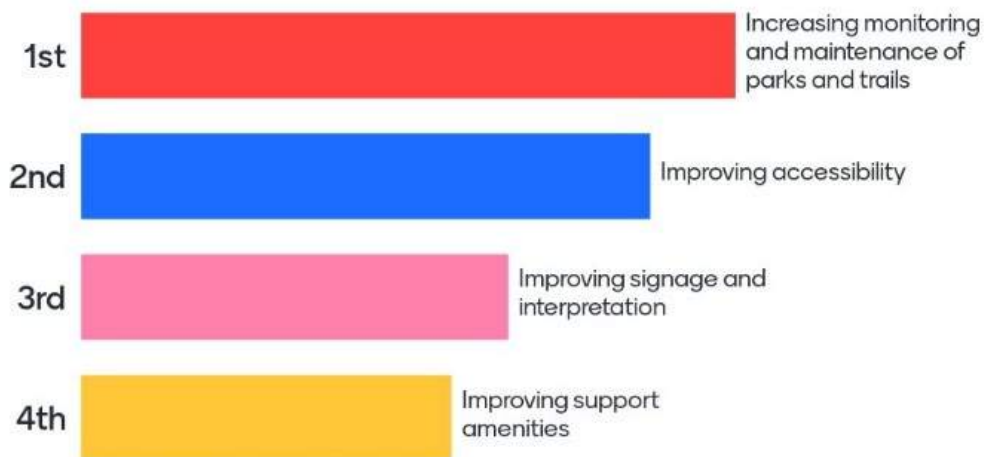- Recreation Sites and Trails B.C. through Section 56 and 57.

POLL 7: HOW IMPORTANT ARE THE FOLLOWING IMPROVEMENTS TO PARKS AND TRAILS?

Participants ranked parks and trails improvements from 1 to 4. Improving accessibility and increasing monitoring and maintenance or parks and trails, were the top choices at each open house

1-2pm

1st	Improving accessibility
2nd	Increasing monitoring and maintenance of parks and trails
3rd	Improving support amenities
4th	Improving signage and interpretation

7-8pm

|	
1st	Increasing monitoring and maintenance of parks and trails
2nd	Improving accessibility
3rd	Improving signage and interpretation
4th	Improving support amenities

POLL 8: HOW SUPPORTIVE ARE YOU OF A MULTI-USE PATH ALONG THE HIGHWAY CORRIDOR?

While the choice of very supportive garnered the most support collectively, there was no clear consensus regarding support for a multi-use pathway at the 7pm open house with higher numbers in attendance.

1-2pm

7-8pm
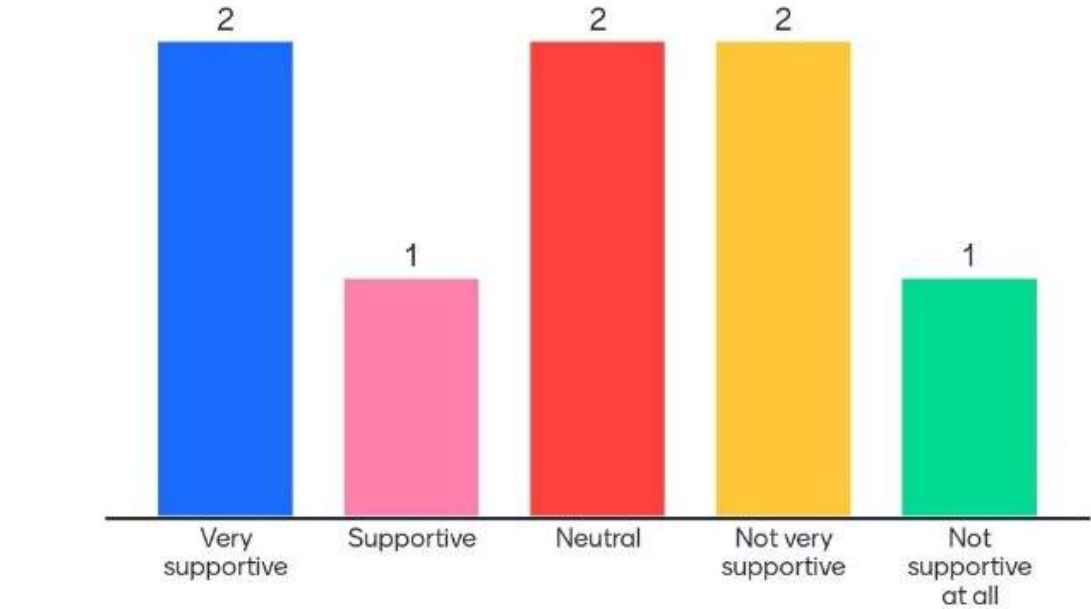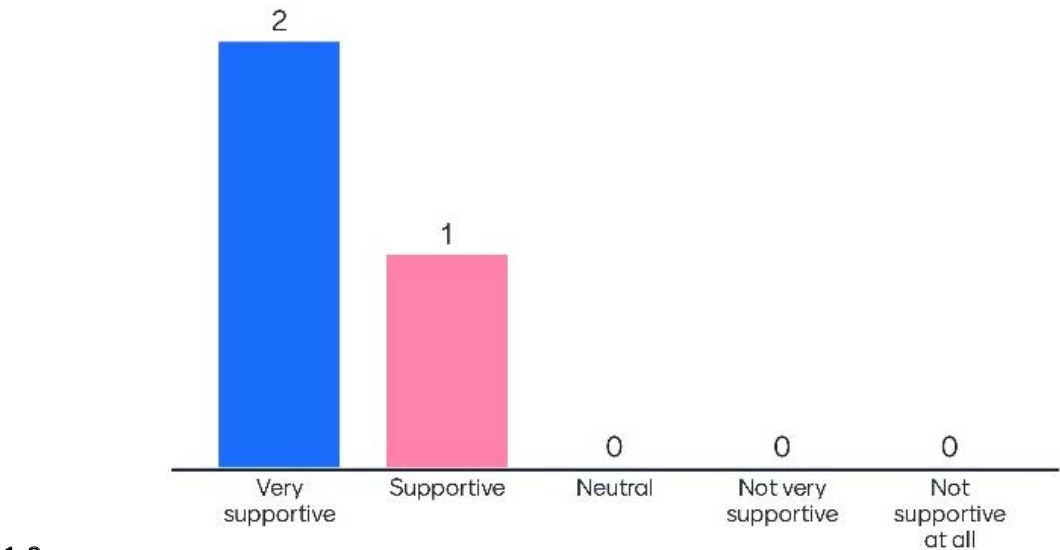
POLL 9: NOW THAT WE'VE DESCRIBED THE FIVE GOALS AND YOU'VE SEEN THE RECOMMENDATIONS UNDER EACH, PLEASE RANK THEM IN ORDER OF THEIR IMPORTANCE TO YOU.

While there was no clear consensus on the prioritization of goals across both open houses, Goal 2, increasing protection and management of natural areas, received high levels of support at both sessions. It is worth reiterating that the 7pm open house had higher levels of participation in the polling exercise.

1-2pm

1st	GOAL 1: Identify and acquire new regional parks and trails
2nd	GOAL 5: Support active transportation and a connected community
3rd	GOAL 2: Increase protection and management of natural areas
4th	GOAL 3: Strengthen community partnerships and volunteer resources
5th	GOAL 4: Enhance the user experience at parks and beach access trails

7-8pm

1st	GOAL 2: Increase protection and management of natural areas
2nd	GOAL 4: Enhance the user experience at parks and beach access trails
3rd	GOAL 3: Strengthen community partnerships and volunteer resources
4th	GOAL 5: Support active transportation and a connected community
5th	GOAL 1: Identify and acquire new regional parks and trails

POLL 10: IS THERE ANYTHING MISSING FROM THE GOALS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OVERALL?

Written suggestions from both open houses are summarized below:

- Support a healthy lifestyle through promotion of activities such as hiking and biking.

- Consult with motorsport and mountain bike clubs/groups.

- Promote parks and trails.

- Equitably distribute parks and trails, as well as resources, for all areas of the region. Example of Savary Island, which receives many visitors but has little support.

- Consider winter recreation for a more balanced, year-round strategy.

- Create new trails on Crown land, constructed and maintained by informal groups.

OTHER COMMENTS FROM THE ZOOM CHAT CAPTURED DURING THE OPEN HOUSES INCLUDE:

- The focus of parkland acquisition should be to preserve natural spaces.

- Protect groundwater and conservation services.

- Reduce the density in over-subdivided Savary Island.

- Protect ecosystems and provide safe access to the beach on Henderson Trail Savary Island.

- Create trails on Savary Island.

- Protect endangered ecosystems from overuse or unsafe use.

- Fund volunteer efforts to remove invasive species.

- What would a partnership with a Land Trust look like?

- "Focusing on Savary, I think it needs a separate strategy based on the fact the majority of the population is vacationers who are there to participate in the nature and natural amenities. It is unique and needs a separate plan."

- Savary has the rarest ecology in the Regional District.