

**Community Parks and Greenways Analysis**  
**February 2024**

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## Summary

The Comox Valley Regional District's Electoral Areas Services Committee resolved on May 8, 2023, that an analysis be conducted, and a report prepared on the Electoral Area Community Parks and Greenways service (service), function 621. The purpose of this report is to summarize the findings of that analysis, which was conducted by staff in the fall of 2023. While some strengths and weaknesses of the service are noted in the report, no recommendations or actions are proposed. Engagement during the analysis process was limited to internal staff from Community Services and Financial Services.

The analysis covered an eleven year period from January, 2013 to September, 2023 focusing on status and trends of service costs, benefits, contributions, assets, liabilities, and maintenance programs. All data and information presented are from that time period and thus may not reflect subsequent changes in the service, its operating and capital budgets, or the Comox Valley Regional District's (CVRD) financial plan.

The CVRD electoral area community parks and greenways service spans the Baynes Sound portion of Electoral Area A, Lazo North (Electoral Area B), and Puntledge-Black Creek (Electoral Area C) and manages 1,389 hectares, or about 0.9 per cent of the service area, and 110 kilometres of greenways and trails. The service does not include community parks and greenways on Denman or Hornby Islands which are managed under their own respective services.

The service's managed land area grew by 14.4 per cent and 30 kilometres of trails were added over the analysis period. The Baynes Sound portion of Electoral Area A saw the largest proportional growth in park land area with the addition of the Royston to Cumberland Trail, Trent River Greenway, and Union Bay Nature Park. Growth in Electoral Area C included the addition of Maris Nature Park, Spike Road Park, Saratoga Beach Access Park, a number of extensions to the One Spot Trail, and the establishment of qax mot Conservation Area. Growth in Electoral Area B included greenways on Piercy Road, Back Road, and at Croteau beach.

## **Costs and Contributions**

Service operations are largely funded through property tax. In 2023, that requisition was \$1,600,000, a 34 per cent increase from 2012 arising from the addition of new parks and greenways and the rising cost of goods and services. A comparison of operating expenditures by service sub area shows that, on a per hectare basis, operating costs are highest in the Baynes Sound portion of Electoral Area A and approximately even among the other service sub-areas. This may reflect economy of scale benefits of managing the relatively larger parks in Electoral Area B, and C.

Capital funding for the service is from a combination of reserve funds, grants, contributions, donations, and funding from other levels of government. Capital

expenditures remained relatively stable over the analysis period at about \$1.2 million per year with occasional increases associated with large land acquisitions.

Contributions to the service between 2014 and 2023 totalled \$13.3 million, primarily in the form of private land donations and community amenity contributions, though the service also received over \$2 million in Community Works Funds and over \$600,000 in grants. The service also received \$150,000 in donations through its Leave a Legacy program which connects service infrastructure needs with community giving.

### **Benefits**

The service is focused on environmental stewardship and protection of natural areas. It has delivered over one third of the priorities and actions of the Rural Comox Valley Parks and Greenways Strategic Plan (2011-2030); these include progress towards completion of the One Spot Trail, expansion of Seal Bay Nature Park, conservation of the Morrison Creek headwaters (qax mot Conservation Area), and establishment of the Royston Seaside Trail. Park maintenance is predominantly managed by non-profit organizations and mental health agencies. It also supports ongoing work to foster and develop meaningful relations with K'ómoks First Nation through the cultural heritage investigation permit process and supporting First Nations language preservation.

### **Assets and liabilities**

The CVRD owns approximately one third of its parks and greenways. The remaining land is operated through leases, licences, and other agreements with third-party land owners, much of which is within the service's most popular parks. While these agreements tend to be long-term (~30 years), absent full ownership or some other protection there is an ongoing risk that some of the service's parks will not be protected in perpetuity.

The service manages a number of infrastructure assets like bridges, pit toilets, staircases, and boardwalks. Replacement costs for these assets far exceeds existing and planned reserve funds and will require a mix of short-term borrowing, property tax increases, and external funding into the foreseeable future. The service is currently carrying approximately \$600,000 in short-term debt incurred to support the 2022 purchase of Spike Road Park; this debt will be cleared by 2027. Risk and liabilities are managed through planning, maintenance, and monitoring of park assets, policies related to safe working environments, and through regular third-party insurance provider assessments.

### **Maintenance Programs**

Basic park maintenance is serviced through partnership agreements with not-for-profit organizations, community health agencies and private contractors. Partnership agreements primarily focus on maintaining existing park service levels with continued concentration of operational spending on flagship parks with heavy visitation. Staff primarily focus their efforts on planning, contract administration, and capital project delivery, though the addition of new services, such as the Regional Parks and Trails

service, for which Parks staff are responsible, is stretching staff capacity to maintain current service levels.

## Introduction

In the spring of 2023, the CVRD Electoral Areas Services Committee (EASC) asked staff to analyze “the costs, benefits, contributions, assets, liabilities and maintenance programs by electoral area” of the Baynes Sound portion of Electoral Area A, B and C Parks and Greenways service (function 621). In conducting the analysis, staff gathered information about the service dating back to the last analysis which was completed in 2012. This report summarizes the findings of that work and, where possible and appropriate, presents information for each of the service’s sub-areas.

## Background and Context

### Service profile

Prior to 2007, there were eight individual community parks functions serving eight distinct electoral areas within the regional district of Comox-Strathcona. The creation of a merged parks and greenways service in 2007 for the newly formed Comox Valley Regional District, was intended to permit pooling of resources from the electoral areas to promote the development of an equitable community parks service and, in the absence of a true regional parks service, to allow for the development of larger, more regionally significant community parks like Seal Bay Nature Park, Nymph Falls Nature Park, and the Royston Seaside Trail.

On February 15, 2008 the province divided the Comox-Strathcona Regional District into the Comox Valley and the Strathcona regional districts, leaving the CVRD with three sub-areas: Baynes Sound – Denman/Hornby Islands (Electoral Area A), Lazo North (Electoral Area B), and Puntledge-Black Creek (Electoral Area C). Note that the service area does not include Denman Island or Hornby Island, each of which have their own community parks services (Figure 1).

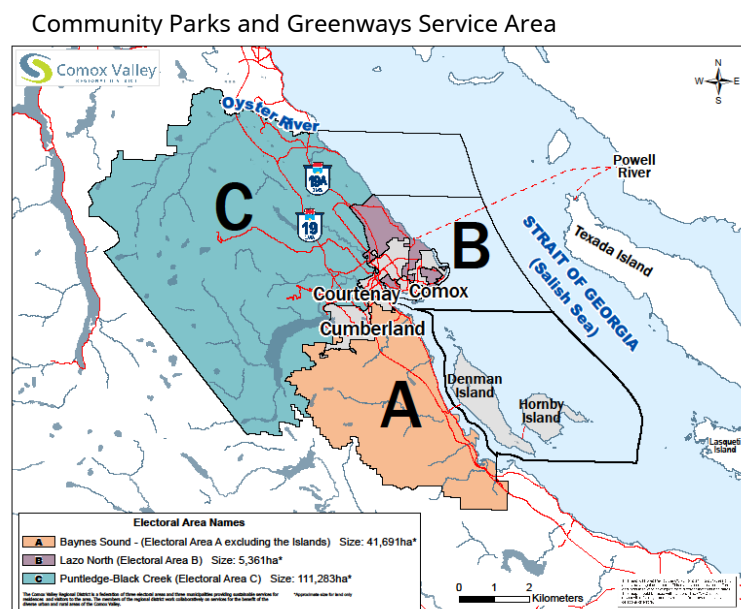


Figure 1

Today, the service consists of 74 parks and greenways spanning 1,389 ha and representing nearly one per cent of the total service land area. The service also maintains 110 km of greenways and trails, 33 km of which are classed as greenways and the remaining 77 km are trails. The proportion of park space to population is highest in

Electoral Area B where there is about 0.22 hectares of park land per household; this proportion is lower in Electoral Areas C, with 0.16 hectares per household, and in the Baynes Sound portion of Electoral Area A, with 0.05 hectares per household.

**Table 1. 621 - Service Profile 2023**

<b>Electoral Area</b>	<b>Population (2021) *</b>	<b>Households (2021) *</b>	<b>Service Area (Ha)**</b>	<b>Parks (#)</b>	<b>Trail (km)</b>	<b>Park Area (Ha)</b>	<b>Park Area (%) ***</b>
Baynes Sound	5,310	1,989	41,691	18	8	102	7%
Area B	7,392	3,147	5,361	25	41	680	49%
Area C	9,158	3,735	111,283	31	61	607	44%
<b>Total</b>	<b>21,860</b>	<b>8,871</b>	<b>158,335</b>	<b>74</b>	<b>110</b>	<b>1,389</b>	<b>100%</b>

\* Population and Household counts are from Statistics Canada's 2021 Census of Population

\*\* Service area does not include coastal waters.

\*\*\* Park Area (%) reflects the proportion of park area within each sub area.

Total park land area grew by 14.42 per cent over the analysis period with 17 new parks spanning 175 hectares. Notable additions include Maris Nature Park, Spike Road Park, Union Bay Nature Park, and the Royston to Cumberland Trail. The service also added 30 kilometres of trail over the analysis period.

**Table 2.**

Baynes Sound portion of Electoral area A, B and C  
Parks and Greenways (function 621)

<b>New parks 2013-2023</b>	
	Area (ha)
<b>Baynes Sound</b>	83.51
Fanny Bay Community Park	0.41
Royston to Cumberland Railway Trail	29.32
Trent River Greenway	13.73
Union Bay Nature Park	40.05
<b>B</b>	0.67
Back Road Greenway	0.2
Croteau Beach Greenway	0.08
Piercy Bridge Greenway	0.39
<b>C</b>	90.82
Eagles Greenway	1.6
Jack Shark Park	2.21
Keith Ware Park	0.2
Maris Nature Park	16.02
One Spot Trail	15.46
qax mot Conservation Area	22.38
Saratoga Beach Access	0.23
Spike Road Park	29.88
Tsolum River Commons	2.38
Wilfred Road Conservation Area	0.47
<b>Total</b>	<b>175</b>

Just 35 per cent of CVRD park land is CVRD owned or otherwise permanently dedicated as park. The CVRD relies heavily on licences, permits, leases, statutory rights-of-way, and other agreements for the remainder of its park lands and some of its largest and most popular parks (e.g., Seal Bay Nature Park, Nymph Falls Nature Park, Goose Spit Park) are partially or totally operated through licences from the province.

**Table 3.**

Baynes Sound portion of Electoral area A, B and C Parks and Greenways (function 621)

<b>Park land tenures</b>		
	Area (ha)	Area (%)
Licence	542	39%
CVRD Owned/Dedicated Park	485	35%
Operating Agreement	273	20%
Lease	61	4%
SRW	18	1%
Permit	10	0.7%
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,389</b>	<b>100%</b>

At the time of this analysis, 93 per cent of the lands designated as community parks and greenways were under active management. However, a number of newly acquired parks (e.g., Maris Nature Park, Union Bay Nature Park, and Spike Road Park) were in the process of being activated during the analysis process. Once this work is completed the proportion of actively managed parks will be closer to 96 per cent. Active parks typically have amenities which encourage public use, such as trails, benches, and comfort stations while inactive parks tend to be small, typically less than one hectare in size, and have no amenities.

In 2015, an analysis of inactive parks was conducted to prioritize park activation based on geographic and ecological attributes. Notable park activations since that analysis include Saratoga Park, Driftwood Park, and Pinecrest Park. Staff continue to work towards activating inactive parks.

The Baynes Sound portion of Electoral Area A, B, and C Parks and Greenways Service is delivered through a combination of CVRD parks staff, not-for-profit community groups, mental health groups, residents' associations, volunteers, and private contractors. Each summer, the service hires two parks summer students (0.30 FTEs each) to support park maintenance efforts during the busiest part of the year and provides the students with valuable work experience.

### Costs

Service costs can be described in terms of operations and capital projects. Operations are ongoing costs associated with maintaining individual parks and service-wide costs associated with personnel, vehicles, equipment, and other general expenditures.

Operations are primarily funded through an annual tax requisition.

Capital costs, are typically one-time expenditures associated with land acquisition and/or infrastructure projects. Funding sources for capital projects include service reserves, parcel tax revenue, development cost charges, debt servicing, and external sources like



federal and provincial grants including Community Works Funds. Community Works Funds have particularly been an important funding source for capital projects.

### Operating Revenue

Service operations are funded through a mix of property tax, fees and charges, and other revenues received by agreement, enterprises, gift, grant, or otherwise. Taken together, these revenues amounted to nearly \$18.4 million over the analysis period, nearly all of which (98 per cent) was from property tax.

**Property tax** – In 2023, the service requisition was \$1.6 million, a 34 per cent increase since 2013. Despite this increase, the tax rate per household decreased by 45 per cent to \$0.15 per \$1,000 of assessed value and is considerably lower than the maximum allowable rate of \$0.50. This is due to growth in the number of households and property value increases. In 2023, the average assessed value for a property in Electoral Area A was \$892,000, while this is for the entire Electoral Area including Hornby Island and Denman Island, it suggests that the cost of the service was about \$134 per household in the Baynes Sound portion of the area. In Electoral Area B, where the average assessed value was \$920,000, the service costed about \$138 per household, and in Electoral Area C, where the average assessed value was \$836,000 per household, the service costed about \$126 per household. Put another way, during the analysis period the Baynes Sound portion of Electoral area A, proportional share of the tax requisition was 27 per cent, Electoral Area B proportional share was 31 per cent, and Electoral Area C proportional share was 40 per cent of the total monies requisitioned for the service. These rates remained relatively stable over the analysis period.

The approved 2023- 2027 financial plan reflects 13 per cent property tax increase by 2027, achieved through a \$0.02 increase in the tax rate. The proportional contribution to the service from each electoral area is expected to remain the same as it was in 2023 for the 2027 projection.

**Table 4. 621 - Tax Requisition for 2013, 2023, 2027 (Budget)**

	2013		2023		2027 (Budget)	
	\$	%	\$	%	\$	%
Baynes Sound	\$321,677	27%	\$433,337	27%	\$487,504	27%
Area B	\$380,625	32%	\$523,621	33%	\$589,073	33%
Area C	\$490,698	41%	\$643,042	40%	\$723,422	40%
	\$1,193,00	100	\$1,600,00	100		100
Total	0	%	0	%	\$1,799,999	%
Tax Rate per \$1,000	\$0.27	--	\$0.15	--	\$0.17*	--

**Table 5. 621 – Average assessed value and service cost per household**

	2013	2023	2027 (No change in assessed value)
Area A*	\$387,000	\$892,000	\$892,000*
Area B	\$399,000	\$970,000	\$970,000
Area C	\$326,000	\$836,000	\$836,000
Average Assessment	\$370,667	\$899,333	\$899,333*
Average Cost per Household	\$100.08	\$134.90	\$152.89*

\* Includes assessed values for properties on Hornby Island and Denman Island

**Additional Revenue** – In addition to a tax requisition, the service generated \$421,276 in operational revenue over the analysis period through recoveries from other services, cash donations, rental and permit fees, other revenues from grants, and asset sales. This additional revenue varied considerably from year to year, ranging from around \$8,000 in 2013 to \$67,000 in 2021. Note that these revenues do not include items like transfers from reserve, and parcel tax, each of which are addressed elsewhere in the report. It also does not include prior year surpluses (Table 6).

**Table 6. 621 - Other Revenue for 2013 and 2023**

	2013		2023	
	\$	%	\$	%
Recoveries	\$3,109	36%	\$50,551	91%
Donations	\$3,895	45%	\$0	0%
Other Revenue	\$1,302	15%	\$0	0%
Rental Land	\$0	0%	\$4,546	8%
Other Permit Fees	\$300	3%	\$350	1%
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$8,606</b>	<b>--</b>	<b>\$55,447</b>	<b>--</b>

## Operating Expenditures

In 2022, operating expenditures were \$1.1 million; the majority of which was allocated to staffing (42 per cent) and operating contracts (40 per cent). Other notable expenses included administration (eight per cent), professional services (eight per cent), vehicles and equipment (one per cent), and public engagement (one per cent). Operating expenditures increased by about four per cent per year over the analysis period<sup>1</sup>. While the service added a number of new parks during that time, which accounted for some of that increase, the per hectare cost of park operations also increased over the period; in 2013, park operations cost \$674 per hectare. In 2023, that number rose to \$798 per hectare<sup>2</sup>. Costs associated with service contracts, material costs, professional and

<sup>1</sup> Data collection and analysis were conducted in mid-2023 and so expenditure data for 2023 were incomplete.

<sup>2</sup> Note that service-wide expenditures were allocated to each service area based on the proportion of park land in the area relative to the total park land in the service

technical services saw the largest increases. Note that operating expenses reported here do not include contributions to reserve, minor capital expenditures, debt, and ecological gifts, which are typically included in operation expenditure reporting. These expenses are addressed elsewhere in this analysis (Table 7)

Looking ahead, the approved 2023-2027 financial plan reflects relatively stable operating expenditures, with an average annual increase of just one per cent (Table 7).

**Table 7. 621 - Operating Expenditures for 2013, 2022, and 2027 (Budget)**

	2013		2022		2027 (Budget)	
	\$	%	\$	%	\$	%
Staffing	\$399,552	48%	\$464,649	42%	\$492,082	39%
Contracts and Expenses	\$326,547	39%	\$447,293	40%	\$559,010	44%
Administration	\$82,102	10%	\$86,090	8%	\$110,504	9%
Professional and Technical Services	\$18,771	2%	\$87,690	8%	\$64,200	5%
Vehicles and Equipment	\$7,576	0.90%	\$14,734	1.32%	\$14,125	1%
Engagement	\$3,160	0.38%	\$12,926	1.16%	\$21,000	2%
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$837,708</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>\$1,113,381</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>\$1,260,921</b>	<b>100%</b>
Total (per hectare)	\$674	--	\$798	--	--	--

Service-wide expenditures like personnel costs and vehicle and equipment purchases account for nearly 60 per cent of the service's annual operating budget. The remaining 40 per cent are linked to service sub-area specific expenses. The Baynes Sound portion of Electoral Area A, which has about seven per cent of the service's park land, incurred about 11 per cent of the park-specific expenditures in 2022. Meanwhile Electoral Area B, which has 49 per cent of the service's park land, incurred about 46 per cent, and Electoral Area C, which has 44 per cent of the service's park land, incurred 43 per cent.

### Capital Expenditures - 2013 - 2022

The service allocated nearly \$16 million to capital projects over the analysis period. Spending was relatively stable at about \$1.2 million per year over the analysis period, though major capital funds increased by an order of magnitude in 2022 due to a number of significant land acquisitions including the Maris Nature Park donation, the purchase of Spike Road Park property, and dedication of parkland associated with the Union Bay Estates development including a portion of Hart Creek. The per household capital expenditure varied among service sub-areas with the Baynes Sound portion of Electoral Area A receiving the highest allocation at \$1,680 per household, followed by Electoral Area C with \$1,412, and Electoral Area B with \$561. General capital expenditures included the purchase of vehicles and other equipment for the service.

**Table 8. 621 Minor and Major Capital Expenditures**

	<b>2013-2022</b>	<b>\$/per household</b>
Baynes Sound	\$3,341,317	\$1,680
Area B	\$1,765,181	\$561
Area C	\$5,274,020	\$1,412
General	\$5,366,751	\$605
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$15,747,270</b>	<b>\$1,775</b>

### Capital Expenditures – 2023-2027

The 2023-2027 Financial Plan allocated \$4,777,799 for service capital expenditures over the five year financial period. These funds are senior government grants and reserve transfers. Highlights of the 2023 – 2027 capital plan include:

- Lazo Greenway: 2023 Budget – \$731,770 (contributions from Reserves: \$100,000 and Senior Government Grants: \$631,770). This is a collaborative project between the CVRD, the Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure and the Town of Comox. To date, the project has received approval in principle for up to \$1.345 million or 60 per cent of eligible costs through the federal government’s Active Transportation Fund.
- Seal Bay Nature Park: 2023 Budget – \$407,146, (contributions from Reserves: \$45,000 and Senior Government Grants: \$362,146). Upgrades to Coupland Loop Trail to make it more accessible for those with mobility challenges. Improvements to Don Apps Trail to address erosion challenges.
- Goose Spit Park: 2023 Budget – \$115,000 (contributions from Reserves: \$115,000). Continued management of the log wall to ensure functionality. Possible improvements to the inner bay to help protect the site’s ecological integrity.
- One Spot Trail: 2023 Budget – \$564,194 (contributions from Reserves: \$409,194 and Senior Government Grants \$155,000). Extension of the One Spot Trail to Endall Road and upgrades to the recently purchased Spike Road property.

### Reserves

Four bylaws establish reserve funds for service expenditures, parkland acquisition, capital projects, and strategic plan implementation. Reserves are funded through a mix of annual transfers from operational revenue, a service-wide parcel tax, development cost charges, and funding from other levels of government.

- **Future Expenditure Reserve** (*Bylaw No. 2928*) establishes a fund to pay the future costs associated with claims against the regional district, its officers or its directors, arising from the provision of the parks and greenways service including the deductible amount payable under a policy of insurance and legal costs, by transferring the balance and interest from each electoral area into one common future expenditure reserve fund.

- **Capital Works Reserve** (*Bylaw No. 2927*) - is to be used for, or in respect of, capital projects and land, machinery and equipment necessary for them and the extension or renewal of existing capital works by transferring the balance and interest from each electoral area into one common capital reserve fund.
- **Land Acquisition Reserve** (*Bylaw No. 2926*) - a reserve fund to be used for, or in respect of, future parkland acquisition by transferring the balance and interest from each electoral area into a common parkland acquisition reserve fund.
- **Strategic Land Acquisition** (*Bylaw No. 270*) – a parcel tax of \$19 per folio was established for the service in 2013. Revenue is to be used for the acquisition and development of park priorities identified in the Rural Comox Valley Parks and Greenways Strategic Plan (2011) and is unavailable for operations. The parcel tax amount has remained unchanged since it's establishment.
- **Parkland Development Cost Charges** (*Bylaw No. 238*) - parkland development cost charges (DCCs) are currently levied at subdivision for single residential, per unit for multi-residential and per room for tourist accommodation and are intended to maintain service standards as the population grows without unduly burdening existing rate payers. A change to this bylaw was approved in 2023 and will change the levy to all new dwelling units and will come into effect at the end of 2024 after provincial approvals.

The reserve fund balance total for the service was \$3,355,792 in 2023. The approved 2023-2027 Financial Plan anticipates that reserves will to grow by 33per cent by 2027. Reserve balances are summarized in Table 9.

	<b>2023 (Actual)</b>	<b>2027 (Budget)</b>
Future Expenditure Reserve	419,096	618,055
Capital Works Reserve	1,110,033	1,950,114
Strategic Plan Reserve	407,318	129,250
Land Acquisition Reserve	1,339,330	1,663,330
Development Cost Contribution	80,015	80,015
<b>Total</b>	<b>3,355,792</b>	<b>4,440,764</b>

### **2023 – 2027 Reserve Plan**

- Future Expenditures Reserve (Function 621) to manage operational risk and liability exposure and unforeseen circumstances. Development of reserve management guidelines are needed to develop a minimum balance for this reserve.
- The Capital Works Reserve (855) to fund asset management replacement and upgrades of existing parks assets and new capital projects. Planned contributions of \$396,022 in 2023. Development of reserve management guidelines are needed for appropriate asset management.

- Development cost charges (DCC) reserve (892) to fund projects identified in the 2012 Park Development Cost Charge Report. As DCC contributions are entirely based on development within the service area, the CVRD does not project future contributions. The DCC reserve does not have any capital projects attached to it through the 2023 – 2027 financial plan and the balance is projected to remain relatively flat.
- The Land Acquisition Reserve (884) to acquire and conserve lands in the region.
- The Strategic Plan Reserve (882) to fund the acquisition and development of park priorities identified in the Rural Comox Valley Parks and Greenways Strategic Plan (2011).

### Contributions

The service received over \$13 million in contributions between 2014 and 2023<sup>3</sup> (Table 10). The majority of those contributions, nearly 80 per cent, came in the form of private land donations. Notable examples included donations of Maris Nature Park, Union Bay Nature Park, and Wilfred Road Conservation Area, each of which occurred in 2022. The service also received Community Works Funds (CWF) and Grants for capital projects; these are described in greater detail below.

**Table 10 621 - Contributions 2014 – 2023**

	CWF	Grants	Donations*	Total (\$)
Baynes Sound	\$94,621	\$57,805	\$1,248,382	\$1,400,808
Area B	\$1,214,465	\$578,614	\$131,000	\$1,924,079
Area C	\$858,228	\$3,700	\$9,121,000	\$9,982,928
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$2,167,314</b>	<b>\$640,119</b>	<b>\$10,500,382</b>	<b>\$13,307,815</b>

\* Does not include Leave a Legacy donations which amounted to \$150,000, or volunteer and other in-kind donations which are critical to the on-going functioning of the service.

The service received land donations through the federal government's Ecological Gifts Program, gifts from private estates, and community amenity contributions negotiated through rezoning and development applications (Table 11).

<sup>3</sup> No data were available for 2013

**Table 11**                      **621 - Land Donations 2013 - 2023**

<b>Area</b>	<b>Park</b>	<b>Year</b>	<b>Type</b>	<b>Value at transfer</b>
Baynes Sound	Trent River Greenway	2016	Donation	\$48,382
Baynes Sound	Union Bay Nature Park	2022	Community Amenity Contribution	\$1,200,000
Area B	Dyke Road Park	2016	Donation	\$131,000
Area C	Jack Shark Park	2016	Donation	\$640,000
Area C	Maris Nature Park	2022	Ecological Gift	\$7,510,000
Area C	Saratoga Park	2022	Community Amenity Contribution	\$491,000
Area C	Wilfred Road Conservation Area	2022	Community Amenity Contribution	\$480,000

### Community Works Fund

The province's Community Works Fund is a critical funding source for the service (Table 12). CWF projects for the service have been largely focused within Electoral Area B, and Electoral Area C, these funds are allocated for all Electoral Area services, not just for parks, and fund allocations are decided by area Directors.

The CVRD Board committed the following allocation of Community Works Funds as part of its 2023 - 2027 capital plan:

- Area B Community Works Funds for Seal Bay Park improvements in the amounts of \$100,000 in 2023, \$70,000 in 2025 and \$30,000 in 2026;
- Area B Community Works Funds for Lazo Greenway in the amount of \$350,000 in 2023;
- Area B Community Works Funds for Dyke Road Park in the amounts of \$25,000 in 2023 and \$325,000 in 2024;
- Area B Community Works Funds for Barbara Road Greenway in the amount of \$30,000 in 2027;
- Area C Community Works Funds for One Spot trail and Spike Road property improvements in the amount of \$155,000 in 2023, \$150,000 in 2024 and \$700,000 in 2025;
- Area C Community Works Funds for Nymph Falls Park in the amounts of \$50,000 in 2025 and \$250,000 in 2026.

**Table 12** 621 - Community Works Fund expenditures 2014-2023

	Project	\$	\$/per household
<b>Baynes Sound</b>		<b>\$94,621</b>	<b>\$47.57</b>
Baynes Sound	EA Playgrounds - Fanny Bay Playground	\$94,621	\$47.57
<b>Area B</b>		<b>\$1,214,465</b>	<b>\$385.92</b>
Area B	Dyke Road Park Improvements	\$36,170	\$11.49
Area B	Lazo Road Greenway	\$65,135	\$20.70
Area B	Harvard Road Beach Access	\$16,600	\$5.27
Area B	Hawkins Road Trail	\$28,971	\$9.21
Area B	Nob Hill Greenway	\$114,650	\$36.43
Area B	Piercy Road Greenway	\$200,000	\$63.56
Area B	Seal Bay Park Improvements	\$752,939	\$239.26
<b>Area C</b>		<b>\$858,228</b>	<b>\$272.71</b>
Area C	Driftwood Marine Park	\$88,024	\$23.57
Area C	Eagles Drive - Stairs and Trail	\$70,000	\$18.74
Area C	qax mot Conservation Area	\$84,667	\$22.67
Area C	One Spot Trail extensions	\$404,506	\$108.30
Area C	Saratoga Beach Access	\$111,031	\$12.52
<b>Total</b>		<b>\$2,167,314</b>	<b>\$553.50</b>

## Leave a Legacy

The Leave a Legacy Program was adopted in 2011 as an action of the Rural Comox Valley Parks and Greenways Strategic Plan to link community interest in donating time and resources with infrastructure needs of the service. The program, which includes a list of standard gifts and allows for custom and distinctive gifts, facilitated nearly \$150,000 in donations between 2011 and 2022. Memorial benches were by far the most common type of donation during that time, far exceeding service infrastructure needs, particularly at popular locations. This led the CVRD to remove the memorial bench option from the program in 2023.

## Grants

The CVRD received the following grants in 2023:

- \$1,345,500 from the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs: Infrastructure and Communities to support the creation of an approximately 2.5 km, multi-modal trail along Lazo Road from Sand Pines Road to Butchers Road;
- An allocation of Growing Communities Funds from the Province of BC in the amount of \$90,000 to support improvements to Goose Spit Trail in 2024;
- An allocation of Growing Community Funds in the amount of \$120,000 to support improvements to Seal Bay Nature Park in 2025.



- A \$1,149,454 grant for Community Emergency Preparedness Disaster Risk Reduction/Climate Adaptation program from the Union of British Columbia Municipalities to support Greenshores work at Dyke Road Park.

Grants can be an important source of funding for this service, however they are usually one time funding for specific projects and as such they cannot be relied upon as a stable source of future funding. It is possible that other levels of government will reduce grant funding as provincial and federal budgets become more difficult to balance, placing additional pressure on local governments to ensure sustainable financing is available.

## Gifts

The service received a number of land donations during the analysis period. Notably the Maris Nature Park, 40 acre oceanfront property, was donated through the federal government's Ecological Gifts Program in 2022. Staff were working on receiving two large parcels on the Oyster River, from the estate of Father Charles Brandt, as this analysis was completed.

## Benefits

### Strategic Plan Priority Projects

The Rural Comox Valley Parks and Greenways Strategic Plan, 2011 – 2030 (plan) outlines a strategy to expand the network of parks and greenways for public enjoyment, recreation, and conservation. The strategy includes a list of 25 priority projects and, in 2012, Urban Systems estimated that the capital cost to implement the projects was \$19 million (adjusted to CAD 2023). About one-third of that work is now complete, leaving about \$12.5 million in capital investment remaining. Some of the projects are on hold to respect the K'ómoks First Nation treaty process which has interests in some of the plan's priority projects.

Priority	Description	Status
Western toad conservation park & migration routes	Protect breeding and migration areas	Complete
One Spot Trail extension north/south & trail connections	Trail extensions preferably on the Comox Grade	In-Progress
Partnership for Williams Beach Forest and trail connections	Licence from province and/or explore co-management agreement for continued public recreational use with potential future First Nation owners	On hold

Priority	Description	Status
Seal Bay Forest (seek more secure tenure)	Replace 10 year licence with 30 year licence from the province and/or seek a crown land grant.	Completed
Garry oak ecosystem conservation area	Protect Garry oaks stands through land purchase and/or conservation agreements	Not started
Puntledge Triangle incl. Browns River and Stotan Falls	Looped trail network along Browns and Puntledge Rivers to connect Nymph Falls Park, Stotan Falls, and Crown land	Preliminary
Courtenay River estuary wildlife management area	Support provincial wildlife management area designation, purchase private property in strategic locations, develop an estuary management plan.	On hold
Royston Waterfront Trail	Multi-use trail with green-shores shoreline protection	Completed
Royston to Cumberland Trail	Multi-use trail	Completed (to Inland Hwy)
Trent River corridor	Trail above bank	Not started
E&N Rail with trail and waterfront routes	Trail within rail corridor with connections to nearby parks and alternate waterfront routes (i.e. Union Point)	Preliminary
Saratoga beach parking and washroom	Day use area	Completed (19 parking stalls with outhouse and change room)
Black Creek store and/or Black Creek Hall to Miracle Beach trail	Pursue multi-use trail via SRW's, land purchases	Not started
Wolf Lake and trail connections (e.g. to One Spot Trail)	Consider boat and canoe launch, parking, camping sites, outhouses, multi-use trails	Not started
Tsolum River crossing to link One Spot Trail North and South	Bridge or other means to cross the river	Preliminary
Wildwood Forest Trail north to Headquarters woodlot	Multi-use trail	Not started
Morrison Creek	Protect sensitive areas	Completed

Priority	Description	Status
Comox Road to Back Road Trail	Multi-use trail	Completed
Comox Road pedestrian/bike trail	Road-side cycling/pedestrian trail	On Hold
Sand dune ecosystem conservation park	To be determined based sensitivity of site	Not started
Goose Spit to MacDonald Wood (connect to Filberg Park in Comox)	Waterfront trail where feasible	Preliminary
Vancouver Island Spine corridor	Backcountry hiking trail	Preliminary
Rosewall Creek trail to waterfall and Waterloo Creek	Trail upgrades, new trail development	Not started
Access points to river spots for public use	Land use agreements with private landowners.	Preliminary
Beach accesses kept open for public use	Memorandum of Understanding with MoTI, permits over select accesses, signs, trail upgrades, parking	In-Progress and Ongoing

### Strategic Plan Actions

The plan also includes 26 action items related to funding strategies, partnership opportunities, policies for park management and stewardship, as well as mechanisms to report back to the public on achievements. The CVRD has implemented 11 (42 per cent) of those actions, an additional eight (31 per cent) actions are ongoing, and the remaining six (22 per cent) have either not been started or are in the preliminary stage of implementation.

Description	Status
Evaluate new park interests using the <b>criteria for parkland acquisition</b> .	<b>On-going</b>
Create ' <b>conservation area</b> ' as a new park classification.	<b>Completed</b>
Achieve <b>acquisition priorities</b> .	<b>On-going</b>
<b>Update the electoral areas official community plan</b> to include the principles, policies and mapping in the parks	<b>Completed</b>

and greenways strategic plan. Update existing parks and greenways policies and maps.	
<b>Refer areas of interest</b> identified outside of the electoral areas to the relevant municipality.	<b>Completed</b>
Implement a <b>tax levy for parkland acquisition.</b>	<b>Completed</b>
Implement a <b>development cost charges bylaw for parks.</b>	<b>Completed</b>
Pursue <b>opportunities to jointly acquire land</b> to meet park needs in municipal and electoral areas during the first five years of this plan.	<b>Preliminary</b>
<b>Actively encourage bequests, gifts of land</b> and financial contributions in cooperation with land trusts and/or conservancies.	<b>On-going</b>
Review <b>eco-gift authority</b> of the regional district.	<b>Completed</b>
<b>Partner with First Nations</b> to provide recreational opportunities.	<b>Preliminary</b>
<b>Use land leases and statutory rights-of-way agreements</b> to secure parks and greenways.	<b>On-going</b>
<b>Work with the farming community</b> when proposing trails within or bordering farm land to mitigate against negative impacts on existing and future agricultural operations.	<b>On-going</b>
Work with Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure to <b>ensure beach accesses remain open to the public.</b>	<b>On-going</b>
Explore land use agreements over access to popular <b>mountain biking areas.</b>	<b>Not started</b>
Establish a <b>multi-stakeholder Open Space and Ecosystem Task Force</b> to develop strategies for ecosystem protection, overseeing and coordinating local and regional work on parks, trails, ecosystem protection and restoration.	<b>Not started</b>
Continue to <b>work with the community</b> in the development of parks and trails.	<b>On-going</b>
Update <b>park management plan development guidelines.</b>	<b>Not started</b>
Develop policies to <b>ensure public safety.</b>	<b>Ongoing</b>
Develop a <b>policy for fencing</b> along park boundaries.	<b>Completed</b> (but not supported when presented in 2012)

Develop a <b>'Leave a Legacy' parks gift program.</b>	<b>Completed</b>
Explore creating a <b>park zone.</b>	<b>Completed</b> (but not supported when presented)
Explore <b>other planning tools</b> such as density bonus and density transfer to encourage the protection of greenspace.	<b>Completed</b>
Explore <b>natural areas tax exemption</b> to encourage protection of greenspace on private property.	<b>Completed</b>
<b>Report regularly on progress</b> toward achievement of the goals and actions of the rural Comox Valley parks and greenways strategic plan.	<b>On-going</b>
<b>Review progress</b> and consult with the public on outstanding priorities mid-way into plan implementation.	<b>Not started</b>

The plan calls for regular progress reporting. Since adoption, three reports have been completed (2013, 2015, and 2021). The plan also calls for a mid-term review in which consultation with the public is to occur to confirm priorities for the remaining years of the plan; this analysis may best be completed following the activation of the recently established Regional Parks and Trails Service.

### Climate Crisis and Environmental Stewardship and Protection

Parks protect sensitive ecosystems, critical habitat, native biodiversity, foster important ecosystem services like carbon capture and storage, and storm water management; the preservation of natural systems is among the simplest and most effective ways to address climate change.

### Community Partnerships

The Parks Department employs community health associations and not-for-profit organizations to help deliver park services; it also works collaboratively with community groups on the design and delivery of park infrastructure and with conservation groups on the acquisition of parkland. The Parks Department also convenes other local governments on initiatives of regional significance.

### Indigenous Relations

The CVRD is committed to working with K'ómoks First Nation to ensure that their rights and title are protected, collaborate in the areas acquisition, stewardship, archaeological and cultural preservation, are pursued for those lands identified to be of interest to K'ómoks.

### **Active Transportation**

The Active Transportation Network Plan seeks to build out a regional active transportation network and encourage a transportation mode shift. Projects highlighted in the plan coincide with service priorities, perhaps most notable being the One Spot Trail. The Regional Parks and Trails service will likely also support objectives of the plan as the parks service has the current responsibility of construction oversight.

## **Assets and Liabilities**

### **Land Tenure**

The CVRD owns 485 hectares of its 1,389 hectares of parks and greenways. The remaining two-thirds of service lands are operated through leases, licences, operating agreements, and other agreements with third-party land owners. While these agreements are typically long-term (~30 years), their renewal is not guaranteed. Further, while it is unlikely, if one or more of these agreements were not renewed, the CVRD may be liable to return the subject lands to their original unimproved state.

### **Infrastructure Assets**

Service infrastructure assets are adequately resourced and maintained on an as-needed basis. Asset replacement is planned and implemented through annual five-year financial planning which has proven effective. However, financing for asset replacement sometimes requires short-term borrowing and/or external funding, because service reserves are insufficient; taking a life-cycle approach to infrastructure planning would ensure that adequate reserves are available when needed.

The service includes a number of infrastructure assets, including pedestrian and vehicle bridges, pit toilets, and stairs.

### **Replacement**

A rough estimate prepared by staff suggests that the service has a large asset replacement liability of \$775,000 (in 2023 CAD) between 2023 and 2032. Nearly half of these costs are for pedestrian and vehicle bridge replacement and another quarter are for the replacement of viewing stands. These estimates do not account for any emergency or unanticipated replacement costs or for the replacement of minor assets like culverts, bollards, or signage.

In the coming decade, the majority of the service's asset replacement costs, nearly half, are for assets in Electoral Area C, another third of these costs are for assets within Electoral Area B, and the remaining 15 per cent are for assets within the Baynes Sound Portion of Electoral Area A.

The foregoing is based on rough estimates; further work would be required to better understand the service's asset replacement liability.

### **Maintenance**

Maintenance of existing assets accounted for nearly half of the service's annual operating budget in 2023 and those costs are expected to grow in the coming years. Any decision to take on new assets should be accompanied by commensurate increases in the service's

annual operating budget for the useful life of those assets. Typical maintenance costs for common park assets are provided in Table 13.

**Table 13. 621 Typical asset maintenance cost**

	Maintenance costs (\$/yr)
Pedestrian Bridge	\$200
Garbage Can	\$650
Staircase	\$200
Trail (1km)	\$600 - \$900
Playground	\$1,000
Outhouse	\$2,000
Boat Ramp	\$2,200
Parking Lot	\$5,000

### Asset Retirement Obligations

The Service has no asset retirement obligations as all license of occupation or right of way agreements between CVRD and ministries of the province of British Columbia and similar organizations for land restoration at the end of useful life of an asset are conditional on the unilateral direction of the other party and unless notified, not required to be incurred by CVRD, hence deemed to be contingent.

### Debt

The service borrowed \$650,000 in August 2022 to purchase Spike Road Park. The 2023-2027 Financial Plan lays out a debt repayment schedule of \$130,000 per year over five years. Interest over the term of loan is calculated on the loan declining balance. Annual interest rate change will influence the data in Table 14.

**Table 14. 621 - Planned Debt 2023 - 2027**

	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	Total
Debt Charges- Interest	\$26,000	\$32,500	\$26,000	\$19,500	\$13,000	\$117,000
Debt Charges- Principal	\$130,000	\$130,000	\$130,000	\$130,000	\$130,000	\$650,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$156,000</b>	<b>\$162,500</b>	<b>\$156,000</b>	<b>\$149,500</b>	<b>\$143,000</b>	<b>\$767,000</b>

### Risk Management

The regional district has a legal obligation to exercise due diligence by maintaining the parks and greenways system to a minimum safety standard as the land owner and in accordance with the Occupier's Liability Act and other relevant legislation related to environmental protection and safe work conditions.



Risk management procedures in CVRD parks which include regular inspection and maintenance of amenities, clear signage, fire mitigation and closures, mandatory risk assessment and environmental assessment prior to acquiring land, protect the regional district against claims. Risk assessments are conducted by the regional districts' insurer and risk reports are retained and referenced as a key source of information directing park management and operations. Most of the recommendations of a 2011 Baseline Liability and Risk Assessment Report have been actioned and a plan is in place to record and track completion of the remaining recommendations of the report.

## **Maintenance Program**

### **Service Delivery Model**

Service delivery is overseen by the Manager of Parks and the following parks staff: one parks planner, and three parks technicians. Many of the service's day-to-day tasks like litter clean-up and trail maintenance are performed by service groups and volunteers. Professional services such as hazard tree removals, biology services, and park design as well as construction projects are provided by contractors in accordance with the CVRD purchasing management services policy. Service contracts cost the service approximately \$400,000 annually in recent years and that number is expected to increase by about five per cent by 2027. This is roughly equivalent to 5.5 full time equivalent employees. Volunteers and summer students are also utilized for providing service in some parks, either for special projects or ongoing maintenance. The retention of existing volunteers and recruitment of new volunteers has been identified as a strategic priority.

### **Resources and Capacity**

The growth in both the size and number of parks, as well as the increase in park visitors, alongside the addition of new services for which Parks staff are responsible, continues to strain the staff's capacity to maintain the high-quality service residents expect. While one additional staff position was added in 2017 and two positions were reclassified during the analysis period. It may be beneficial to conduct further analysis to determine if additional capacity is required to sustain existing and planned workloads and service levels.

### **Bylaws and Policies**

The service was established in 2006 through Bylaw No. 2925 being "Electoral Areas 'A', 'B' and 'C' Parks and Greenways Service Bylaw No. 2925, 2006". The purpose of the bylaw was to merge three separate community parks local service area bylaws into one common service for the provision and operation of community parks and greenways. It provides authority for the regional district to acquire, develop, operate and maintain community parks and greenways. Also allowing, by way of the bylaw, to make rules and regulations governing the use, management, improvement, operation and control of any real property owned or property held under license, lease or permit for park purposes. Concurrent with adoption of Bylaw 2925, the regional district adopted three bylaws for the

purpose of establishing reserve funds for parkland acquisition, capital reserves, and future expenditures for the newly merged parks and greenways service. It subsequently adopted a strategic land reserve bylaw to implement a parcel tax, and a DCC bylaw to fund a portion of its strategic plan. Finally, the service also adopted a park regulations bylaw governing park use, laying out fees for park use permits, and listing the service's parks and greenways.

The service is directed by the Rural Comox Valley Parks and Greenways Strategic Plan, 2011 – 2030. It is also subject to CVRD policy related to volunteering, playground maintenance, occupational health and safety, pesticide use, facility naming, donations (leave a legacy), public engagement, procurement and land acquisition.