

# MOUNT GEOFFREY PARKS ISSUES AND DRAFT STRATEGIES

This document provides the detailed background context that informed the poster content presented at the Mount Geoffrey Planning Open House on June 13, 2015.

This information was developed following the compilation of background information, a public outreach event and survey in 2014, meetings with the Mount Geoffrey Planning Committee and preliminary First Nations engagement.

## **Public Feedback – Comment period open until August 31, 2015**

Feedback from the open house and the online comment period will be used by CVRD and BC Parks to develop separate draft management plans for the Mount Geoffrey Regional Nature Park and Crown land trails, and the Mount Geoffrey Escarpment Provincial Park.

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## **1. Mount Geoffrey Management Planning (Introduction)**

**Open House Purpose:** BC Parks and CVRD are working together to collect public input on management direction for Mount Geoffrey Nature Park and Mount Geoffrey Escarpment Provincial Park. The materials presented at the open house build on the outcome from public outreach conducted in August 2014. Based on the input received, the CVRD will be drafting an update for the regional Mount Geoffrey Nature Park Master Plan, which will include direction for both the park and the Crown land trails. BC Parks will develop a draft management plan for Mount Geoffrey Escarpment Provincial Park.

### **Management Planning Steps:**

1. **Pre-planning and research:** gather background information
2. **Draft management plan development:** current phase: engage Planning Committee, First Nations, key stakeholders, and the public.
3. **Draft management plan review:** provide draft management plans for planning committee and online public review

4. **Final draft management plan:** revise draft management plans to reflect input from review.
5. **Management Plan approval:** approval of the Nature Park and Provincial Park Management Plans
6. **Implementation, monitoring and evaluation.**

## Current Planning Phase: Draft Management Plan Development

- **Background Information:** reports and studies, 2007 public outreach, park user groups and stakeholders, identification of values, opportunities and issues.
- **Mount Geoffrey Planning Committee:** The Mount Geoffrey Planning Committee is comprised of representatives from local community groups<sup>1</sup>. The volunteer committee is working with the CVRD and BC Parks to provide guidance on the development of draft management direction. The committee also plays an important advisory role in public outreach and communication with the local community.
- **First Nations:** Invitation to participate in the Mount Geoffrey planning process was sent to First Nations whose Traditional Territory includes Mount Geoffrey. Engagement with First Nations expressing an interest in the management planning process.
- **Public Outreach:** Planning committee meetings; public outreach at the Saturday Farmer's Market and Co-op (August 2014); online and paper copy questionnaires. Highlights of the questionnaire responses and a complete compilation of responses and comments are posted at [www.comoxvalleyrd.ca/mountgeoffrey](http://www.comoxvalleyrd.ca/mountgeoffrey). Handouts to take away and display copies are available at the open house.

## 2. Draft Park Visions

The vision describes the long-term desired future condition for a park. It presents a picture of the park if the proposed management direction has been successfully implemented.

### Mount Geoffrey Regional Nature Park

For the Regional Park, the following points are reflective of content contained in the current 1998 park master plan and comments received by the public in the August 2014 Mount Geoffrey planning outreach initiative.

- Healthy, functioning ecosystems – including coastal bluffs, wetlands and coastal Douglas-fir forests.
- *Vision statement relating to First Nation cultural values (to be developed).*
- An extensive trail network for low impact walking, horseback riding and mountain biking in a natural setting.
- The trail system extends into the adjacent Crown lands and provincial park, creating one large contiguous natural area.
- The focus is on adaptive management to protect or restore functioning and resilient natural ecosystems.

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<sup>1</sup> In addition to representatives from BC Parks, CVRD and Recreation Sites and Trails B.C., the Mount Geoffrey Planning Committee includes: Islands Trust (Alex Allen, Tony Law); Conservancy Hornby Island (Tony Quin); Hornby Island Provincial Parks Committee (Betty Kennedy, Janet LeBlancq), Hornby Island Provincial Parks Committee (Ilze Raudzins, Joanne Wyvill), Hornby Island Mountain Biking Association (Sasha Lebaron, Tig Cross).

- Park management is integrated with adjacent Crown and provincial parklands.
- The park is maintained through local forces overseen by the Regional Parks Committee with funding and support from the CVRD.

## **Mount Geoffrey Escarpment Provincial Park**

For the Provincial Park, the following summary is from information provided by the Hornby Island Provincial Parks Committee and appears reflective of public opinion as collected through the August 2014 Mount Geoffrey planning outreach initiative.

- Healthy, functioning ecosystems – including Coastal bluffs, wetlands and coastal Douglas-fir forests.
- *Vision statement relating to First Nation cultural values (to be developed).*
- *A vision is required for the Leaf House and Ford family homestead area.*
- A small number of scenic trails offer opportunities for low impact cycling and walking in a natural setting.
- The trail system extends into the adjacent regional park and Crown lands, creating an expanded and more diverse recreational experience.
- The focus of management is protection, restoration and maintenance of ecosystems.
- Park management is integrated with adjacent Crown and Regional Park lands, to create a relatively seamless recreational experience and volunteers are welcome to assist in meeting park management objectives.

## **3. Mount Geoffrey Key Values**

### **Significance/Importance:**

- Located on southern and central Hornby Island containing Mount Geoffrey Escarpment Provincial Park, Mount Geoffrey Nature Park and a parcel of Crown land protecting 790 hectares or 25% of Hornby Island.
- Mount Geoffrey parcels combined are among one of the largest contiguous natural areas on the Gulf Islands.
- Statement on cultural importance to be developed.
- Conserves the rare Coastal Douglas-fir biogeoclimatic zone and its associated ecological and plant communities.
- Protects habitat for several species at risk.
- Popular with locals and visitors for year-round recreational opportunities.
- Includes coastal bluffs, mature forests, wetland networks and a series of hiking and biking trails.
- Groundwater recharge area for the island.

### **Key Ecological Values:**

- Northern extent of the rare coastal Douglas-fir biogeoclimatic zone.
- Forests of coast Douglas-fir, western redcedar, western white pine, Garry oak, arbutus and bigleaf maple.
- Wetland networks, coastal bluffs, forested benches and rugged shoreline.
- Rare plant communities.

- Species at risk including the Peregrine Falcon and Northern Red-legged Frog.
- Critical area for rainfall capture to recharge groundwater on the island.

### **Key Recreational Values:**

- Hiking trails.
- Mountain biking trails.
- Equestrian trails.
- Spectacular views to Denman Island, the Beaufort Mountains on Vancouver Island and Georgia Strait.
- Nature appreciation.
- Photography.
- Bird watching and wildlife viewing.

### **Key Cultural Values:**

- *First Nations cultural values... To be developed.*
- Ford family homestead site including farm fields and orchard.
- Architecturally unique Leaf House.
- Opportunities for cultural awareness and education.

## **4. Draft Updated Mount Geoffrey Trail Map**

The draft-updated map includes a few more recently constructed trails that were not on the old Mount Geoffrey trail map. However, in order to stay within existing trail maintenance and repair budgets, user created trails that do not meet environmental, safety and connectivity criteria were purposely not mapped. This was done in order to discourage use of those trails and allow for their possible future closure. The map can be accessed at [www.comoxvalleyrd.ca/mountgeoffrey](http://www.comoxvalleyrd.ca/mountgeoffrey)

## **5. Trail Network**

***Goal: Provide a variety of trail experiences for hiking, mountain biking and horseback riding.***

### **Sustainable Trail Network**

The trail network on Mount Geoffrey has been expanding steadily over the past few decades. The current trail network offers a variety of experiences from wide multi-use trails to walking-only trails and includes easy and technical mountain biking trails. The existing trail system meets user needs and is manageable within current budgets, volunteer, staff and contractor resources.

There are some user-created trails on Mount Geoffrey that have been built without knowledge and support from the Hornby Island Regional and Provincial Park Committees or from BC Parks or CVRD Parks. Each new trail adds to the annual trail maintenance and repair costs for Mount Geoffrey parks and Crown lands and places additional stress on park maintenance budgets. Further, some of the user-created trails do not meet trail standards for safety, erosion control or respect for environmentally sensitive areas such as wetlands, streams and steep slopes. Finally, a high density of

trails introduces more human disturbance into natural ecosystems and wildlife habitat. Most of the user-created trails are on the Crown lands and in Mount Geoffrey Regional Nature Park.

Over the past several months, the Regional Parks Committee has been leading a process to update the trail map for Mount Geoffrey (See map poster). The Committee added some of the user created trails where those trails were safe, didn't impact sensitive environments and provided an important trail connection.

**Objective: Provide safe and enjoyable recreational experiences while ensuring that trail maintenance is sustainable and sensitive environments are respected.**

**Draft Strategies:**

1. Trail work will focus on improving existing trails in the parks and on Crown land, rather than expanding the network.
2. In the longer term, as visitor numbers increase, additional trails may be appropriate in the regional park and on the Crown lands. The following criteria are proposed to evaluate new trail proposals:
  - a. Minimal impact on sensitive ecosystems and other environmental considerations (steep slopes, wetlands, creeks, streams, wildlife migration, etc.)
  - b. Safe for public use. Mountain biking trails meet Whistler standards.
  - c. Result in an important connection that is not provided by other trails.
3. In the provincial park, a new trail linking the Shingle Spit trail to the upper trail network may be appropriate, if a suitable route can be identified that meets the criteria described above.
4. If trails require closure (based on criteria above), decommission trails and sign if needed. (For example: "Do not enter. Natural restoration area.")

## **Maps and Signage for the Mount Geoffrey trail system**

The public who visited the Mount Geoffrey information tables in August 2014, as well as Mount Geoffrey survey respondents, identified better trail directional signs as one of the improvements needed. Many trail users feel that existing trail signs and maps can be confusing and it is easy to get lost. At the same time, those who commented did not want to see too much sign clutter in the parks, and there was a general sentiment that users would not want to see significant changes to Mount Geoffrey's character or "sense of place".

**Objective: Enhance visitor safety and experience by improving maps and signage.**

**Draft Strategies:**

1. Use the updated trail map to focus efforts for signing, which will improve visitors' orientation within the trail system.
2. Work with regional and provincial parks committees to identify mechanisms to improve orientation within the trail system. For example:
  - a. Identify short, medium and long distance walking and cycling routes as part of the official trail network to include on trail maps.

- b. Provide system-wide trail maps at all official entrances and consider 1 or 2 key locations within the regional park or Crown lands to provide trail maps (posted and/or “take aways” available for visitor use).
  - c. Include signage and/or other directional markings to improve orientation within the trail system. For example:
    - i. signage at key intersections and/or trail markers to delineate specific trail routes.
    - ii. mark trail routes with a unique colour/symbol that trail users can follow.
3. In developing options to improve orientation, aim to maintain the natural and social character of Mount Geoffrey. For example, maintain local trail names and ensure signage/directional markings are non-obtrusive (e.g. marked rocks, dots on trees, etc.).

## 6. Recreational Experience

***Goal: Maintain positive recreational experiences in a natural setting.***

### Multi-use Recreational Experience

Generally speaking, interactions between park users are positive and visitors experience very few conflicts with other user groups. Given the multi-use nature of many of the trails, it is important that the various user groups continue to respect the needs of others and share the trails appropriately. In questionnaire responses, some people raised safety concerns and impacts on the enjoyment of their recreational experience.

Safety concerns included interactions with dogs that were off-leash, the speed of some mountain bikers on narrow trails, and walkers on steep mountain biking trails. Concerns regarding impacts to the quality of the recreational experience included dogs off-leash and motorized activities.

Dogs (on or off leash) are expected to be under the control of their owners at all times to prevent conflicts with other park users and to protect natural values (sensitive ecosystems, birds/wildlife, etc.).

Among those who responded to the survey, there is a general feeling that use levels are increasing (particularly mountain biking), but that there are no signs of overcrowding or impacts associated with over use at this time.

**Objective: Maintain a safe and quality recreational experience for all park users.**

#### Draft Strategies:

1. Confirm trail use designations on the updated trail map (see draft trail map).
  - a. In the provincial park, trail designations are for hiking and biking, with one hiking only trail.
  - b. In the regional park and on Crown lands, trails allow for: hiking only, biking and hiking and multi-use (biking, hiking and equestrian).
2. Reinforce the existing culture of respect on Mount Geoffrey in park information materials.
3. Maintain current restrictions on motorized uses in the Parks and on Crown lands.
4. Maintain the existing requirement for dogs to be “on-leash” in Mount Geoffrey Escarpment Provincial Park. Dogs are permitted off-leash in Mount Geoffrey Regional Nature Park and on Crown lands, but dogs have to be ‘under control’ and not negatively impacting the

experience of other park visitors. On the regional park's Cliff Trail, owners are cautioned to leash their dogs to ensure the safety of their pet. This reflects the current practice of most dog walkers.

- a. At key trail heads in the regional park, post dog owner etiquette signs to remind dog-walkers of leashing requirements as appropriate and to keep their pets under control (both for user safety and the protection of natural values).
- b. The CVRD will monitor dog use. If user conflicts increase, the CVRD will explore making some of the busier trails "dogs on-leash" where dog interactions with hikers/bikers could result in safety concerns.
- c. The CVRD will monitor dog impacts on wildlife and explore requiring dog leashing during sensitive times for wildlife, such as fawning and bird nesting times to protect wildlife.

## **Park Improvements**

Many people who responded to the Mount Geoffrey survey or visited the August 2014, display tables said they like Mount Geoffrey 'the way it is'. They want to keep the park natural. While improvements to trail information signs at park entrances and trail directional signs were important to many (see panel 4), outhouses and picnic tables were rated as low priorities. Further, most respondents feel that parking is not an issue at park entrances.

It may be that further park improvements will become a higher priority as visitor numbers increase.

**Objective: Make minimal improvements that respect the natural character of Mount Geoffrey.**

### **Draft Strategies:**

1. Maintenance of the existing trail network and signage for improving orientation (Panels 2 and 4) are the priorities for park improvements.
2. Minimize formal picnic tables and benches to maintain the natural setting of Mount Geoffrey. Depending on the eventual vision for the orchard/Leaf House, picnic tables may be appropriate at that location.
3. Monitor use levels and if park use and need for outhouses or parking increases, the two park agencies will work with the provincial and regional parks committees to identify appropriate locations and designs for those amenities.

## **7. Natural Environment**

***Goal: Protect Mount Geoffrey's rare Coastal Douglas-fir ecosystem and its associated ecological communities.***

### **Natural Values Protection**

CVRD Parks and BC Parks have a dual mandate to provide recreational opportunities and to protect the natural environment. In addition to the important recreational values of Mount Geoffrey's trail system, natural environment and vistas, the Mount Geoffrey Parks were also established to protect important ecological values. While many recreational uses are compatible with the protection of ecological values, it is sometimes necessary to place limits on activities to protect park values. Those

who responded to the questionnaire were generally supportive of protecting ecological values, suggesting public education as the best means to do so.

Mount Geoffrey Planning Committee members felt some visitors have a low level of knowledge about ecological values and the potential impacts various activities can have on those values. As such, the committee identified the need to provide education on ecological values and the potential impacts of various activities.

Key ecological values in the parks include wetland networks, coastal bluffs, rare plant communities and species at risk such as Peregrine Falcon and Northern Red-legged Frog. On a landscape scale, Mount Geoffrey provides a critical role in capturing rainfall and recharging groundwater, and it significantly adds to the protection of the rare Coastal Douglas-fir (CDF) biogeoclimatic zone and its associated ecological communities.

Mount Geoffrey lies within the northern extent of the CDF biogeoclimatic zone that stretches south from Deep Bay to Metchosin along eastern Vancouver Island and includes Denman, Hornby and the southern Gulf Islands. It is the smallest of British Columbia's 14 ecological zones and home to some of the province's most diverse plant and wildlife communities and a large number of rare and endangered species.

The Coastal Douglas Fir and Associated Ecosystems Conservation Partnership (<http://www.cdfcp.ca/index.php/about/why-is-the-cdf-at-risk>) indicates that:

- The Coastal Douglas-fir biogeoclimatic zone (CDF zone) is the smallest and most at risk zone in BC and is of conservation concern (Biodiversity BC, 2008).
- The CDF zone is home to the highest number of species and ecosystems at risk in BC, many of which are ranked globally as imperilled or critically imperilled (BC CDC, 2012).
- The global range of the CDF lies almost entirely within BC, underscoring both its global uniqueness and BC's responsibility for its conservation.
- Of all the zones in BC, the CDF has been most altered by human activities. Less than 1% of the CDF remains in old growth forests (Madrone, 2008) and 49% of the land base has been permanently converted by human activities (Hectares BC, 2010).
- The trend of deforestation and urbanization continues and has resulted in a natural area that is now highly fragmented with continuing threats to remaining natural systems.
- Approximately 9% of the CDF zone is protected in conservation areas (MFLNRO, 2011).
- The extent of disturbance combined with the low level of protection places the ecological integrity of the CDF zone at high risk (Holt, 2007).

Wind, forest pathogens and fire are all important natural processes that help to maintain Mount Geoffrey's ecological diversity. As a high point on Hornby Island, Mount Geoffrey is susceptible to strong wind events. Trees that fall down from wind throw are an important source of coarse woody debris for woodpeckers, salamanders, fungi and many other species. In addition, forest pathogens, such as laminated root rot on Douglas fir, western hemlock dwarf mistletoe and several fungal infections that affect Arbutus trees, contribute to coarse woody debris and standing dead wood that has very high wildlife value for many species. Fire also plays an important role in maintaining the Douglas fir and Arbutus ecological communities on Mount Geoffrey.



## **Objective: Build on existing knowledge of natural values**

### **Draft Strategies:**

1. Continue to fill information gaps related to the ecological values in the Parks and on Crown lands utilizing local, scientific and Traditional Ecological Knowledge.
2. Include information on Mount Geoffrey's ecological values, sensitive ecosystems and ecological processes in park information materials.
3. Work with the regional and provincial parks committees and other partners to develop interpretive/educational materials about Mount Geoffrey's ecological, wetland and groundwater recharge values. For example, support volunteer initiatives and/or partnerships to develop a self-guided interpretive loop with supporting hardcopy and/or digital interpretation.
4. Maintain the natural character of the parks and Crown lands. Aim to have any interpretive signs blend in with the natural environment.

## **Objective: Protect the ecological integrity of the parks**

### **Draft Strategies:**

1. Identify invasive species, monitor their spread and remove as soon as possible. Removal may be done through volunteer work parties in coordination with the appropriate Park Committee, BC Parks and/or CVRD.
2. Include information on the ecological impact of removing downed trees and other natural resources in educational/interpretation materials.
3. Ensure the anticipated effects of climate change (e.g. hotter/drier conditions, increased intensity and frequency of storm events) are considered in park decision making and that parks are managed to facilitate vulnerable species' adaptation to changing conditions.
4. Evaluate whether to recommend the addition of foreshore adjacent to Mount Geoffrey Escarpment Park (excluding any existing tenures and private land access requirements to marine waters).

## **Objective: Minimize user impacts on park ecosystems**

### **Draft Strategies:**

1. Ensure trail construction or maintenance is coordinated through the appropriate parks committee and park agency so Mount Geoffrey trails continue to follow best practices; for example, limiting surface run-off and erosion.
2. Maintain common practice where visitors to the parks and Crown lands are expected to stay on the trails to limit their impact on Mount Geoffrey's forest, cliff and wetland ecosystems.

## **Wildfire Risk Management**

The fire risk associated with Hornby Island's long, dry summers is a concern to residents. The hotter and drier summer conditions anticipated as a result of climate change may further increase the risk of fire in the Gulf Islands.

Reports from the mid-2000s indicate a high fire risk rating for Mount Geoffrey. However, a more recent assessment of wildfire risk by authorities responsible for fire prevention in the province, rated wildfire risk as moderate. Ladder fuels, such as medium sized trees and shrubs that facilitate fires

spreading to the forest canopy, are fairly sparse in the parks and on the Crown lands. Further, several wider trails that bisect the parks and Crown lands, such as Summit, Northwind and Coltsfoot trails, act as breaks should a ground fire get started. These trails also provide access for firefighting purposes. Mount Geoffrey Nature Park has four emergency helicopter landing sites and ponds for firefighting purposes.

**Objective: Minimize the risks from wildfire on Mount Geoffrey**

**Draft Strategy:**

1. Continue existing management practices that reduce the risk of wildfire outbreak and spread (e.g. heli landing sites, wide north-south trails, public education, monitor and manage ladder fuels, etc.).
2. Maintain existing park regulations prohibiting camping and fires.
3. In cooperation with the Hornby Island Fire Department and provincial wildfire prevention authorities, identify appropriate measures for fire prevention in the parks and Crown land.

## **8. Cultural Values (Under Development)**

***Goal: Integrate protection of archaeological and First Nations cultural values into park management.***

***Goal: Recognize the historical significance of the Leaf House and Ford family homestead location.***

### **First Nations Cultural Values**

Management plan content addressing First Nations cultural values and the associated management direction required to protect those values is under development.

Some preliminary content has been provided by the K'ómoks First Nation:

Cultural Values:

- Village at Helliwell was a permanent KFN village site.
- Mount Geoffrey was important as a source of freshwater and monumental cedar.
- KFN is currently conducting a study to compile information about the archaeological and cultural significance of Hornby and Denman Islands.

**Objective: Protecting First Nations Cultural Values**

**Draft Strategies:**

1. Explore opportunities to coordinate any monitoring efforts between CVRD, BC Parks and the KFN Guardian Watchmen.
2. KFN supports a future protected status for Crown lands.
3. Recognize the importance of the area to the KFN on interpretive signs or other public educational materials.
4. Ensure trail construction considers the potential impact on cultural sites and wildlife (fragmentation).

*Note: Management planning is without prejudice to First Nation Treaty outcomes and/or other self-government initiatives.*

## **Community Heritage Values: Leaf House and Ford family orchard**

Many who responded to the questionnaire were supportive of maintaining both the Leaf House and the Ford family orchard. Some respondents suggested the Leaf House be moved, but it is not possible to move the structure from its current location.

There is currently no clear vision for the management of these two cultural features, and no dedicated resources for their maintenance. The Leaf House has begun to deteriorate and the orchard is not formally maintained. Given current circumstances, the cultural value presented by these two features may not be preserved.

### **Objective: Develop a vision for the Leaf House and Ford family orchard**

#### **Draft Strategies:**

1. The Leaf House, orchard trees and grounds will not be maintained unless a suitable partnership can be established.
2. BC Parks is open to establishing a partnership with local community groups to develop and implement a vision for the Leaf House, orchard and/or grounds at this location. Proposed activities must be permissible under the *Park Act*, and the community group may need to be prepared to take on some maintenance responsibilities, particularly if the envisioned use results in increased use of the site.

## **9. Regional Park Addition: Conservation Covenant Area**

***Goal: Protect lower lying, wetland areas, field-forest edge and mature Douglas-fir and Western redcedar forests.***

Since the last park plan for Mount Geoffrey Nature Park was written in 1998, the CVRD has made three additions to the park. In 2003, the CVRD purchased 7.4 ha of land from the Cross family at the end of Strachan Road. The family also donated an additional 16.7 ha as an ecological gift. The acquisition of these properties established a link between Mount Geoffrey Nature Park and Mount Geoffrey Escarpment Provincial Park to the south.

Aside from being in Mount Geoffrey Nature Park, the former Cross properties have an additional level of protection through a conservation covenant that is registered on the title of the land. Conservancy Hornby Island (CHI) and The Land Conservancy of British Columbia (TLC) jointly hold and monitor the covenant. The covenant is to protect and enhance the ecosystem and biodiversity of the lands (see marked areas on the attached map). The conservation covenant also stipulates that a site management plan is required for the covenant area.

The covenant area includes Douglas-fir forest and an open field. This field and the old orchard area in Mount Geoffrey Escarpment Provincial Park provide the only meadow habitat on Mount Geoffrey. The field is used by raptors for hunting and also provides important edge habitat for a number of species of songbirds. However, the field has not been mowed in a number of years and invasive Canada thistle and Scotch broom are increasing in extent.

## **Objective: Inventory and protect values of the parkland additions.**

### **Draft Strategies:**

1. Since field/meadow habitat is rare in the park, the adjacent land owners will keep the field within the conservation covenant area open by mowing. This controls Canada Thistle and Scotch broom, provides songbird habitat and hunting areas for raptors.
2. The CVRD will work with CHI and TLC to complete an inventory of the native plants and animal species found in the conservation covenant area. This information will help the three agencies manage the area for those species.
3. Prepare a site management plan for the covenant area to protect native species and control invasive species.
4. Manage recreational use to minimize impact on the natural environment within the covenant area.

## **10. Crown Land Management and Future of the Crown lands**

### ***Goal: Protect the recreation and natural environment values of the Crown lands into the future.***

The Crown lands are located to the east of Mount Geoffrey Nature Park. These lands are a groundwater recharge area recognized by the province and Islands Trust. The CVRD currently holds a permit to build, repair and maintain trails on the Crown lands. The permit is issued by Recreation Sites and Trails BC, a branch of the Ministry of Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Operations.

The CVRD could apply for a legal designation of the lands under the provisions of Section 56 of the *Forest and Range Practices Act* from Recreation Sites and Trails BC. This designation would legally establish the trail system on the Crown lands and add the trails to provincial status maps. This means other users such as other ministries and forest licensees would need to take the trail system into consideration when they are proposing any type of resource development on the Crown lands.

The designation would be a step toward Hornby Island's long term goal of gaining protected status of the Crown lands (section 3.3.11 c. Hornby Island Official Community Plan, bylaw no. 104, 2002). Under a Section 56 designation, the CVRD and the Hornby Island Regional Parks Committee could post trail designations, set and enforce rules such as no motorized vehicles on the trails, no campfires (especially during the dry summer season) or no camping, for example.

### **Firewood cutting**

Currently, a few people are cutting trees in the Crown forest for their own use or for local sale. However, there is no form of tenure or license from the Ministry of Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Operations for firewood cutting as an economic activity. Further, the Ministry does not issue cutting permits for personal use on Mount Geoffrey in recognition of the rare ecosystems on Mount Geoffrey and its role as a groundwater recharge area. In order to control illegal cutting, as well as inappropriate use of the trails and emergency access roads by motorized vehicles, the

community has sought the gating of vehicle access points to the Crown land and the Regional Nature Park. However, some firewood cutting continues.

Silviculture on the Crown lands is recognized in Hornby Island's Official Community Plan and Land Use Bylaw as an activity that should only be undertaken in the context of a forest management plan. However, the community has not been able to identify and secure a tenure that would enable limited forestry activity in the context of conservation objectives. In the absence of such an arrangement, to date, the community's choice has been for the land to be protected for groundwater recharge, conservation and recreation purposes.

It is not within the CVRD's mandate to facilitate or manage firewood cutting on the Crown lands. The CVRD's focus is the trail system and natural environment.

**Objective: Manage the Crown lands for recreation and nature protection.**

**Draft Strategies:**

1. The CVRD, through the Regional Parks Committee, will continue to manage the area for recreation while seeking to minimize impacts on the natural environment.

**Objective: Ensure protection of the Crown lands into the future.**

**Draft Strategies:**

1. In the short term, The CVRD will apply for legal designation, under the provisions of section 56 of the *Forest and Range Practices Act*, to secure the legal establishment of the trail system on the Crown lands and have greater authority to regulate land use, such as motorized vehicle access, campfires or camping on the Crown lands.
2. Explore other options for securing the long-term protection of the Crown lands.

## 11. Next Steps

**Planning Process:** overview diagram with various management planning steps, emphasizing future phases and opportunities for further public input.

- Complete Development of Draft Plan – on-line comment period until August 31, 2015; review open house outcomes with Mount Geoffrey Planning Committee; continued engagement with First Nations.
- Draft Management Plan Review – CVRD and BC Parks are drafting separate, but complimentary management plans. First Nations and the Public will be provided with an opportunity to review and comment (note, web-based public review).
- Final Draft Management Plans – review outcomes of public review with Planning Committee, complete final drafts.
- Management Plan Approval
- Implementation, monitoring and evaluation – ongoing coordination between provincial and regional parks on implementation initiatives such as visitor education and interpretation, park improvements, trail maps, etc.

## Web-based Public Review of Draft Management Plans

- Individuals who have provided their email addresses to CVRD or BC Parks will receive notification when the draft plans are posted on the web for public review.
- The draft management plans will be posted at:
  - BC Parks: [www.env.gov.bc.ca/bcparks/planning/](http://www.env.gov.bc.ca/bcparks/planning/)
  - CVRD: [www.comoxvalleyrd.ca/mountgeoffrey](http://www.comoxvalleyrd.ca/mountgeoffrey)

*Please contact us for further information, or to provide additional comments.*

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