

To: Electoral Area Services Committee

Date: 2020-10-15

From: David Urban, Manager of Outdoor Recreation Planning

File No: 6120-30-001

Subject: Developing a Policy for Classification of Regional Versus Community Parks and Trails

RECOMMENDATION

THAT the Fraser Valley Regional District Board direct staff to develop a policy to guide the designation of parks and trails as either regional or community assets to provide clarity on the appropriate funding model.

STRATEGIC AREA(S) OF FOCUS

Support Environmental Stewardship

Support Healthy & Sustainable Community

PRIORITIES

Priority #5 Outdoor Recreation

Priority #4 Tourism

BACKGROUND

Fraser Valley Regional District (FVRD) parks and trails are considered to be either “regional” or “community,” generally based on its size, its use, its amenities, and whether it has local or broader significance. This distinction is important as it impacts the funding structure used for acquisition, maintenance, and asset management for the park. Community parks are funded only by taxation from the electoral areas in which they reside, whereas the costs of regional parks are shared more broadly with all electoral areas/municipalities.

While these two types of parks and how they work together are referenced within the FVRD’s park plans, the distinction is not clearly defined. This lack of clarity has created some confusion and disagreements for deciding the appropriate funding model to use for a new park or park amenity or for re-evaluating the status of others.

Of note, this issue is only applicable to those participants in the eastern sub-regional parks function, which does not include the City of Abbotsford and the associated parks of Glen Valley, Matsqui Trail, and Sumas Mountain Regional Parks.

DISCUSSION

The distinction between “regional” and “community” parks or trails is not always clear-cut, which is why a policy is recommended to help outline what considerations should be taken into account when making a decision regarding park classification. Recognizing that some overlap is inevitable, there are certain attributes and characteristics of each that may be considered and will be explored in more detail in the policy.

Regional parks are generally considered to have regional significance, whether recreational, ecological, or cultural. They tend to be situated around a landscape feature and vary in size but are generally larger than a municipal park and smaller than a provincial park. They tend to attract visitors from throughout the region.

Community parks tend to be smaller in size than regional parks. Because each community has different needs, what constitutes a community park can vary greatly; however, the primary role of community parks is to serve daily recreational needs of the surrounding residents.

While these general descriptions provide some guidance, additional clarification is needed, especially as new parks and trails are proposed, and overall usage continues to rise. With this new policy, Electoral Area Directors can still fund community parks as they choose, but for those that may wish the Board to consider funding an asset through a shared regional approach when appropriate, the policy will provide guidance. Likewise, a policy is only intended to serve as a tool to inform Board decisions. In other words, it would always be a decision of the broader service area participants on whether they wish to take on more assets.

COST

None applicable at this time but could have future budget implications.

CONCLUSION

Developing a policy to guide the designation of future parks and trails will help bring consistency and equity to funding models. It would serve as a tool for the Board to help guide their decision-making for classifying, or re-classifying a park or trail as a “regional” or a “community” asset. Once the policy is drafted, staff will report back to the Board.

COMMENTS BY:

Stacey Barker, Director of Regional Services: Reviewed and supported.

Kelly Lownsbrough, Chief Financial Officer/ Director of Financial Services: Reviewed and supported.

Jennifer Kinneman, Chief Administrative Officer: Reviewed and supported.