

To: Regional and Corporate Services Committee
From: Christina Vugteveen, Manager of Park Operations

Date: 2018-02-15
File No: 6120-01

Subject: Parks Visitation 2017

INTENT

This report is intended to advise the Regional and Corporate Service Committee of information pertaining to Parks visitation in 2017. Staff is not looking for a recommendation and has forwarded this information should members want more clarification or to discuss the item further.

STRATEGIC AREA(S) OF FOCUS

Support Healthy & Sustainable Community
Provide Responsive & Effective Public Services

PRIORITIES

Priority #4 Tourism
Priority #5 Outdoor Recreation

BACKGROUND

In 2016, counters were installed at all Regional Park facilities to better understand visitation trends in FVRD parks. These counters were in addition to units that had previously been installed in selected parks. These additional counters provide a more detailed picture of park visitation trends, which will assist parks planning for future needs and demands.

DISCUSSION

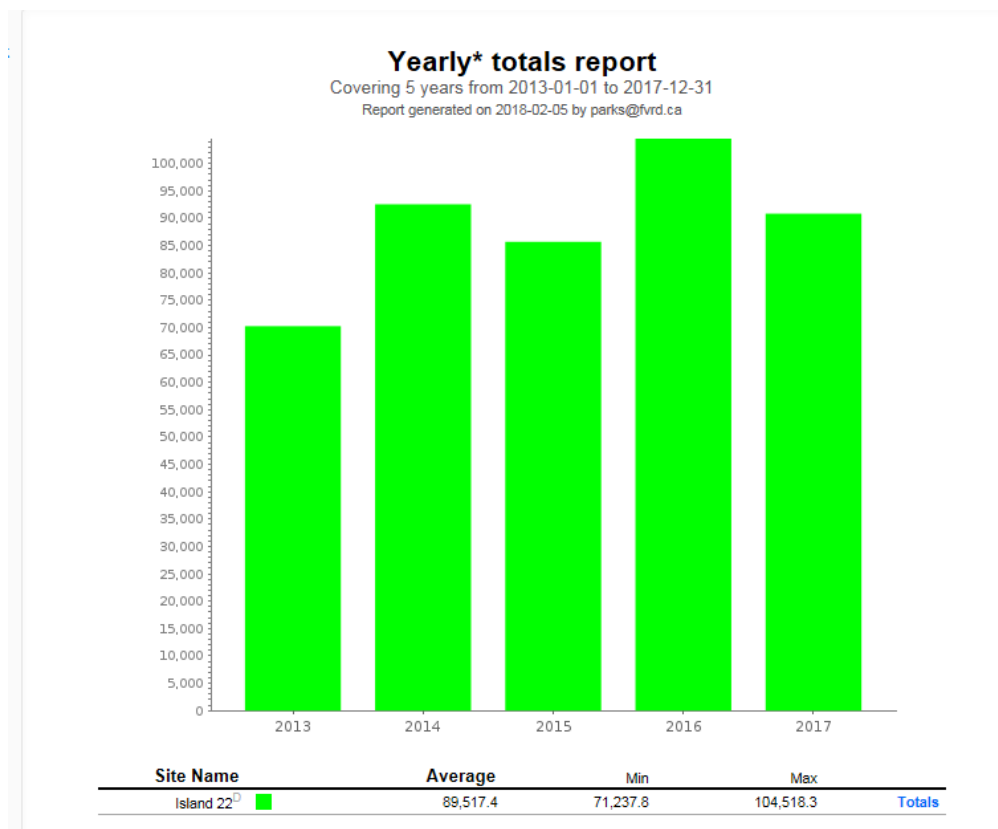
Prior to 2016, the FVRD parks department had been collecting visitation data at a few parks and by the end of 2016 all parks had counters installed. This counter data, which quantifies visitation, has a variety of uses, including helping to effectively allocate resources, such as staff time, required to deliver services and plan for future needs. It also helps to tell the story of what is happening with the parks.

2017 was a year of extremes in terms of weather and as a result we saw an approximate 15% decrease in numbers of people using the parks. In 2017, a total of 800,000 visited FVRD parks.

Factors that created lower visitation most likely included the following:

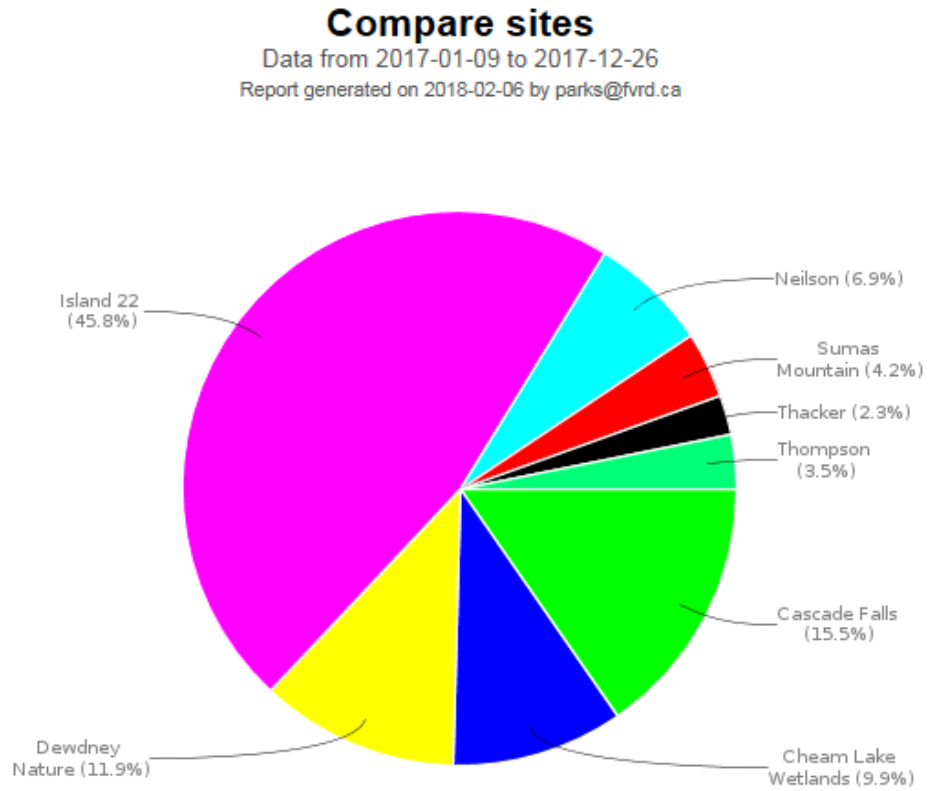
- Winter was unseasonably cold, and the parks experienced many damaging storms and excessive snow and ice. This resulted in closed parks and trails and lower visitation.
- The spring of 2017 was unseasonably wet resulting in lower number in visitation as fewer people wanted to venture out.
- The summer of 2017 was extremely dry and hot. Additionally, mosquitoes were very heavy in July which saw fewer numbers venturing out particularly to the boat launches and the dog off leash park. The lack of fisheries means less uptake on boat launch use at Island 22 and Dewdney. And to top it off, extreme fire hazard in the province also impacted our area with many smoky days and poor air quality keeping people indoors and away from the parks.
- In September, the weather became nice, and we see the number of visits go up again.

As an example, Island 22 is our busiest park. 2016 was our busiest year to date with excellent weather, and major infrastructure improvements. The graph below demonstrated the vehicle counts for the park.

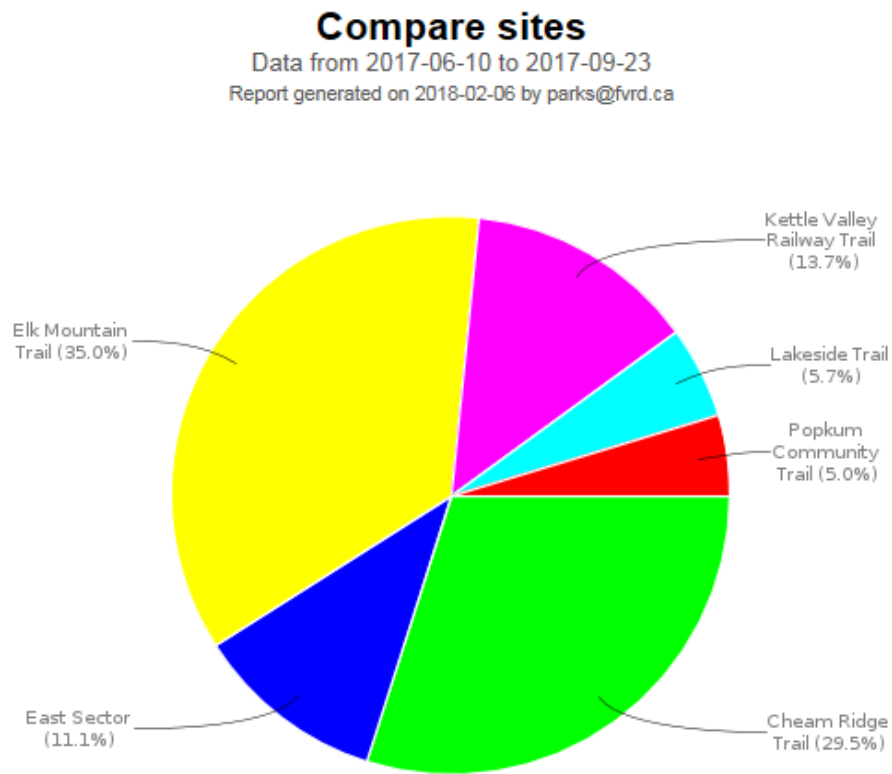


2017 Highlights

The graph below demonstrates vehicle counts for the parks in 2017 which gives us a snapshot of how busy the different parks are with vehicle traffic.



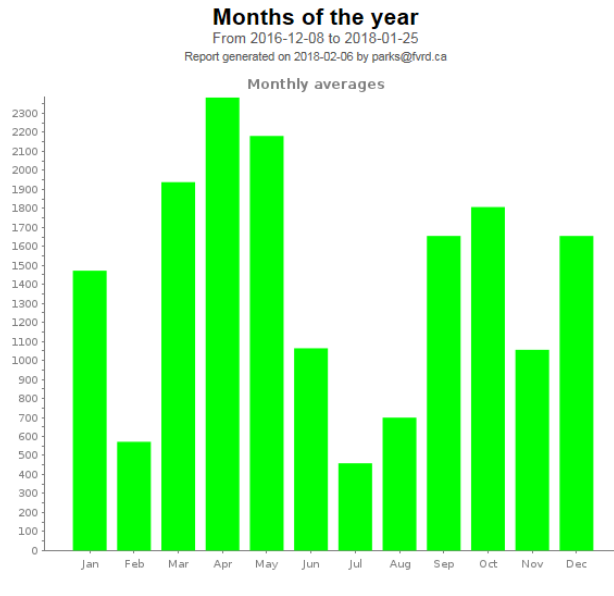
The following graph demonstrates the percentage usage for a variety of trails in 2017.



The data allows us to be able to report out on new initiatives to identify the uptake in usage. Some highlights include Island 22 off-leash Dog Park, Lakeside Trail, Hillkeep Regional Park, Elk Mountain, and Mt. Cheam which is shown in the following graphs.

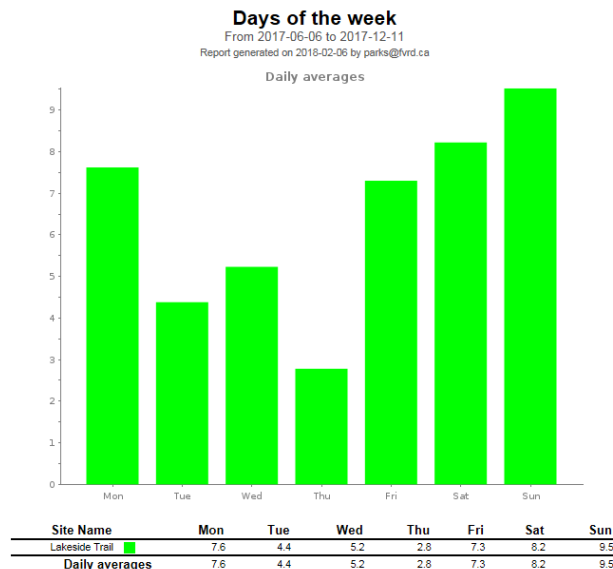
Island 22 off Leash Dog Park

Through the JCP grant, improvements were made to the dog off Leash Park. The park is seeing an average of 50 users a day and the highest usage month to date was April 2017 with 2,363 users (average of 79 users/day).



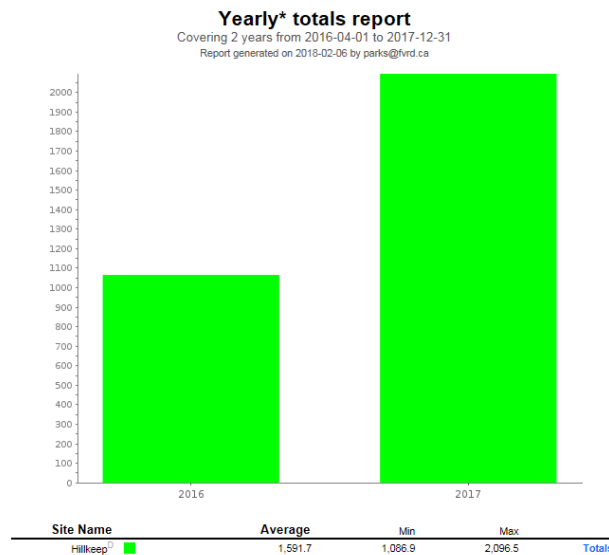
Lakeside Trail – Area H Cultus Lake

This 1 km of trail was finished in July 2017, and over 2300 users have used the trail. The following graph demonstrates how the usage is spread out over the week with Friday-Monday being the busiest.



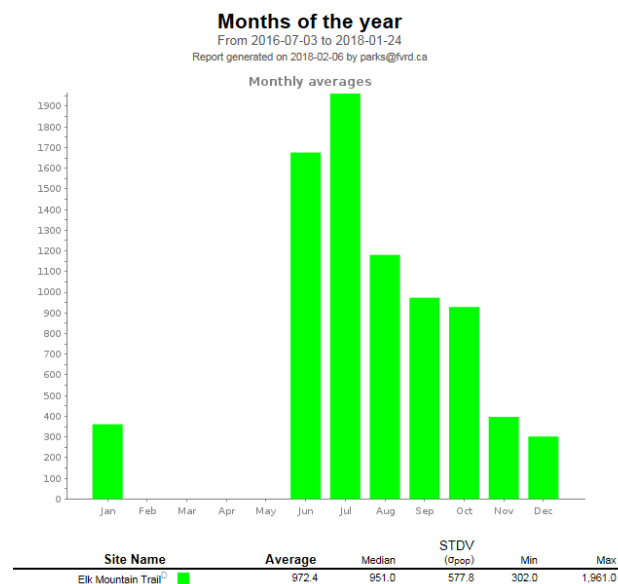
Hillkeep Regional Park

This park was officially opened in October 2017, and the usage of these trails has doubled in the three months since opening as compared to 2016.



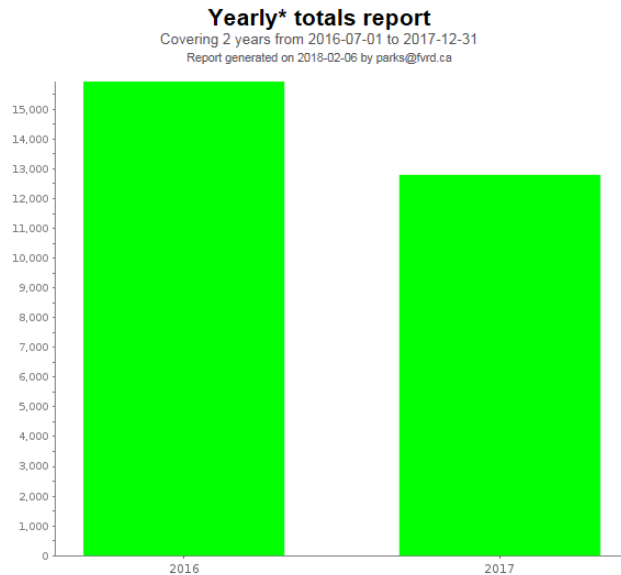
Elk Mountain

Elk Mountain is getting busier. Despite the weather conditions, 2017 saw 11,409 visitors overall an increase of 1,134 from 2016. This increase is congruent with the increased activity we are noticing on social media relating to the popularity of this hike. One new initiative is that the trail counter was kept in over the winter months starting late 2017. As the following graph shows, we are already capturing usage confirming the growing year-round popularity.



Mt. Cheam

When comparing July-October, visitation in 2017 is down by 1,000 from 2016 which is likely attributed to the smoky skies. In 2017, visits in September were up 1,000 from 2016 which is likely partially attributed to the smoke clearing and improved weather conditions.



COST

We have a wide range of counters in place which are working to collect the data. Staff continue to evaluate the need for new data, and could install others if there is a desire to collect more information. The cost of a counter unit installed is \$500 which is included in the existing park budgets. Collection and analysis of data is part of regular operational duties.

CONCLUSION

Data analysis for park visitation is a very helpful tool to assist in identifying visitation trends and planning for the future.

COMMENTS BY:

Stacey Barker, Deputy Director of Regional Programs

Reviewed and supported.

Mike Veenbaas, Director of Financial Services

Reviewed and supported.

Paul Gipps, Chief Administrative Officer

Not available for comment.