



Regional Snapshot Series: Parks and Recreation
Outdoor Recreation & Tourism
in the Fraser Valley Regional District





Harrison Hot Springs



Mount Cheam



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The Fraser Valley Regional District is comprised of six member municipalities and seven electoral areas.

City of Abbotsford, City of Chilliwack, District of Mission, District of Hope, District of Kent, Village of Harrison Hot Springs and Electoral Areas A, B, C, D, E, F and G.



OUR NATURAL ASSETS

OUTDOOR RECREATION IN FVRD

Incredible natural environment and recreation potential

The Fraser Valley Regional District (FVRD) is comprised of six member municipalities and seven electoral areas and features a variety of diverse communities, from small rural hamlets to the fifth largest city in British Columbia. The equally diverse landscape of rugged mountains, sizeable rivers, and fertile valleys offers a myriad of recreational opportunities including hiking, swimming, camping, biking, rafting and fishing, all of which are made use of by residents of the FVRD and beyond.

A growing population combined with an escalating interest in outdoor recreation is increasing the demand for outdoor recreational opportunities in the area: a trend that is likely to continue. This region's incredible natural environment and recreation potential benefits the economy by attracting tourists, businesses and residents. Parks and open space provide wildlife habitat, ensure biodiversity, and mitigate the effects of climate change. In addition, parks are some of the best places to educate people about their natural surroundings and the impact they can have. This alone can generate an appreciation for nature that lasts for generations.

As the population and park usage climbs, pressures on the parks and recreation system will mount. Challenges such as maintaining services at existing recreation sites, adjusting to demographic-led shifts in park usage, and finding suitable, accessible areas to designate as new parkland will increase. But there are many opportunities to take advantage of the region's natural assets in both a sustainable and economically advantageous way. By planning ahead we can ensure that everyone, no matter age, ethnicity, or physical ability, has access to outdoor recreation opportunities and open space.

Fraser Valley Regional District and surrounding area



Cheam Ridge Regional Trail

CHOICES FOR OUR FUTURE: our Regional Growth Strategy

Protecting the rural way of life is an important thrust of the RGS, together with protecting and restoring the natural environment, continued stewardship of park lands, recreation and cultural resources, while maintaining the region's resource-based heritage.

The RGS recognizes the assets and importance of the rural communities and their associated lifestyles.

It also recognizes the value and potential in the large recreational resources that the region has to offer. Managing growth in a sustainable manner will ensure that these values continue to be an important and unique asset to the region.

“Residents use parks and open space year-round...on average 41 times per year.”

- Outdoor Recreation Demand Study 2011

Three scenes from Hillkeep Regional Park



EXISTING OPPORTUNITIES PARKLAND & RECREATION IN THE FVRD

Exploring the Region's diverse geography and attractions

The Fraser Valley's wide range of recreational options showcase the region's unique landscape features. The Fraser and Chilliwack Rivers and the Vedder canal are a good place to start: rafting down the Fraser Canyon, taking a gondola ride across the Fraser at Hell's Gate near Boston Bar, cycling along the dykes in several FVRD communities, and fishing for sturgeon, salmon and steelhead to name a few. Boating and swimming opportunities abound at Harrison and Cultus Lakes, and in Hope the Othello Tunnels offer a walking trail that highlights recent railroad history. The region's rich First Nation's cultural heritage can be explored through emerging eco-tourism opportunities throughout the region. However, one of the best ways to begin exploring is through our region's impressive park system.

Local, Regional and Provincial Parks in the FVRD

There are upwards of 300,000 hectares of parkland and protected areas in the FVRD, and over 300 parks ranging in size from 106,880 hectares to .01 hectares. Whether a small neighborhood park with a children's playground or a sprawling provincial park where you experience wilderness through activities such as hiking, biking or camping, every park has something to offer.

There are over 20 Provincial Parks that are either partially or fully located within the region's boundary. The most well known are Cultus Lake and Manning, but it may be surprising to some that the majority of Golden Ears and Garibaldi parks are located within the FVRD's boundaries as well. Smaller in size but generally located closer to home are ten regional parks and trails managed by the FVRD totalling approximately 1,675 hectares. There are also over 300 municipal parks that dot the cities and towns of our region. These parks serve communities at the local level by providing a wide variety of amenities including playgrounds, walking paths, playing fields and public space where families and community members can gather.

A New Regional Park: Hillkeep

As of January 1st, 2012 the FVRD took over management of Hillkeep Regional Park located on the top of Chilliwack Mountain. This 14 hectare Regional Park and Nature Reserve will provide new opportunities for outdoor recreation activities in addition to protecting important habitat. The existing and planned trail network will link community and neighbourhood parks, viewpoints, and offer passive recreation opportunities for a range of ability levels. Its location overlooking the Fraser River makes it significant to the Experience the Fraser project. The addition of Hillkeep will help meet the growing need for parkland in the region.

FVRD Outdoor Recreation Guide

The Fraser Valley Regional District's Outdoor Recreation Guide is an online service that highlights hiking and other recreational opportunities found throughout the region. The interactive guide provides directions to popular destinations, trail descriptions that include permitted trail uses, level of difficulty and estimated time duration, as well as printable trail maps. The Outdoor Recreation Guide was funded by the BC Community Tourism program, established to highlight regional tourism opportunities. www.fvrd.bc.ca

FVRD Regional Parks

- | | |
|------------------------|-------------------|
| 1. Cascade Falls | 6. Island 22 |
| 2. Cheam Wetlands | 7. Neilson |
| 3. Cheam Ridge Trail | 8. Sumas Mountain |
| 4. Dewdney Nature Park | 9. Thacker |
| 5. Hillkeep | 10. Thompson |

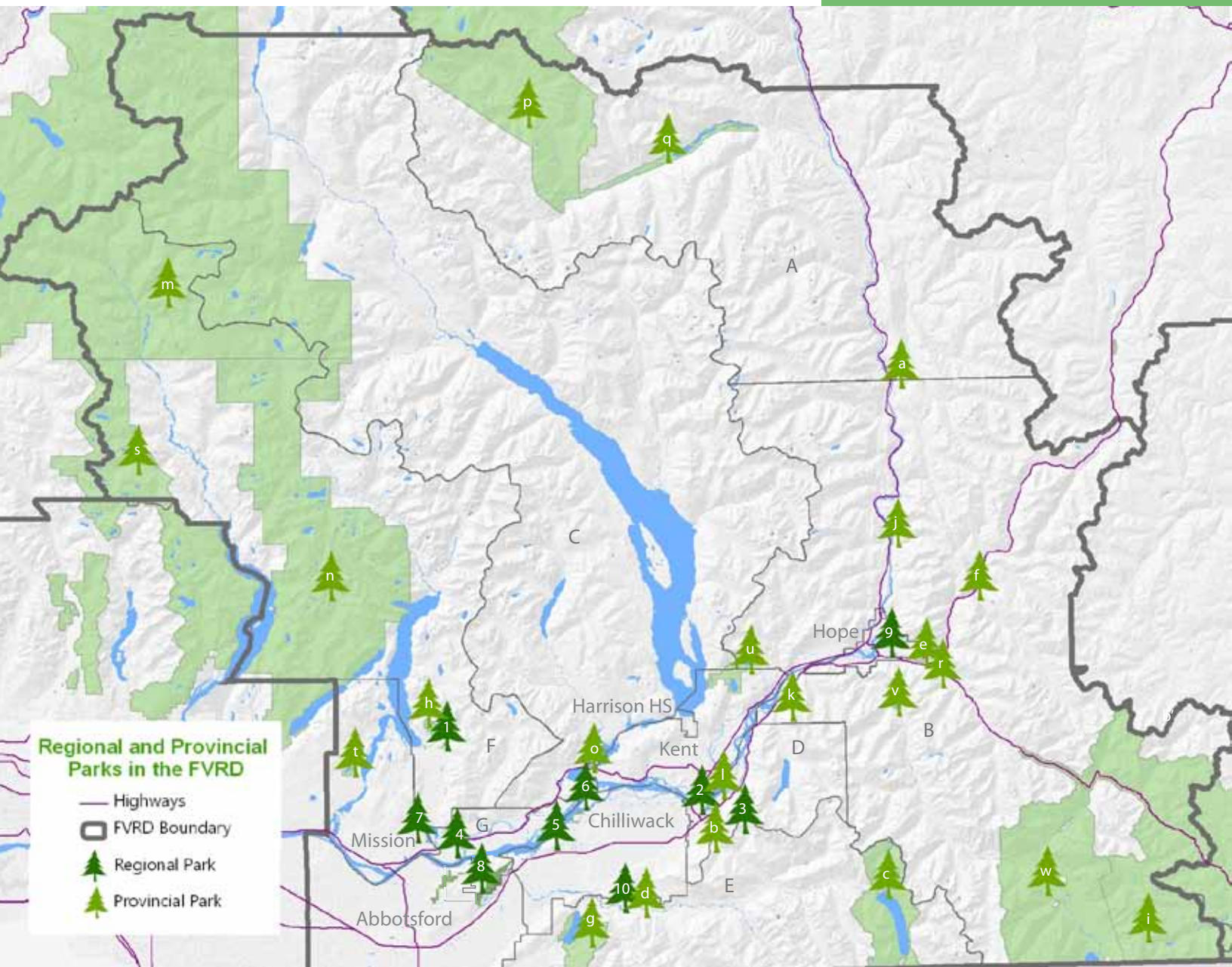
Provincial Parks in the FVRD

- | | |
|----------------------|-------------------|
| a. Alexandra Bridge | m. Garibaldi |
| b. Bridal Veil Falls | n. Golden Ears |
| c. Chilliwack Lake | o. Kilby |
| d. Chilliwack River | p. Mehatl Creek |
| e. Coquihalla Canyon | q. Nahatlatch |
| f. Coquihalla River | r. Nicolum River |
| g. Cultus Lake | s. Pinecone Burke |
| h. Davis Lake | t. Rolley Lake |
| i. E.C. Manning | u. Sasquatch |
| j. Emory Creek | v. Silver Lake |
| k. F.H. Barber | w. Skagit Valley |
| l. Ferry Island | |

Other Recreation Lands in the FVRD

There are endless opportunities to recreate in the FVRD without even stepping into a park. The Ministry of Natural Resource Operations maintains 27 recreation sites and trails on Crown land within the region. These back-country camping and recreation sites are located along the shores of Harrison Lake, throughout the Chilliwack River Valley, and in the Fraser Canyon. (*Recreation Sites and Trails Branch, Ministry of Forests, Lands, and Natural Resource Operations. www.gov.bc.ca/for*)

BC Parks also manages a number of Recreation Areas and Conservancies throughout the FVRD. Differing slightly in terms of regulations and management, both designations offer opportunities for recreation. While most areas are quite primitive, some offer limited facilities. All offer a chance to experience the raw wilderness that BC is known for. (*BC Parks*)



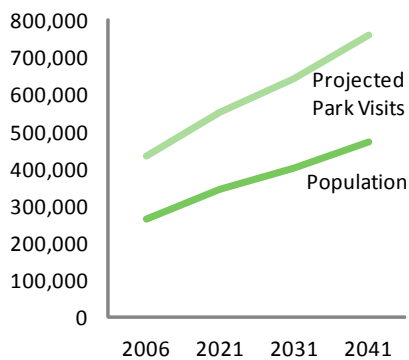
Outdoor Recreation Study

In 2010 Metro Vancouver and the FVRD jointly initiated a Regional Outdoor Recreation Study with the following objectives:

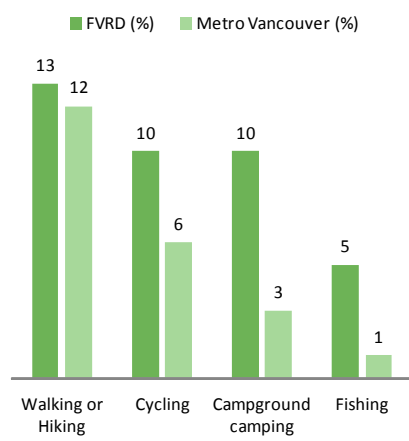
- To assess the region's ability to address outdoor recreation needs
- To determine how best to provide recreation opportunities that support active living
- To provide a basis for an update to the regional parks plan
- To integrate parks planning into the overall regional strategy with the goal of building healthier communities
- To support decision making about priority land acquisitions, recreational services and facilities

Phase I Demand Analysis Report, Regional Outdoor Recreation Opportunities Study, 2011

Projected FVRD Regional Park Visits 2006-2041



Activities Planned to Start in the Coming Year



A GROWING DEMAND FOR PARKS AND RECREATION TRENDS IN PARK USE

Findings of the 2010 Regional Outdoor Recreation Study

In the spring of 2011, the Fraser Valley and Metro Vancouver Regional Districts released the first phase of the study, a demand analysis. A wide variety of research methods, including focus groups, interviews, and both web-based and phone surveys were used to collect information. The study looked at all available parks and outdoor recreation activities, with particular emphasis on regional parks. Phase two, a supply and gap analysis, is expected to be released in 2012.

Demand Study Highlights

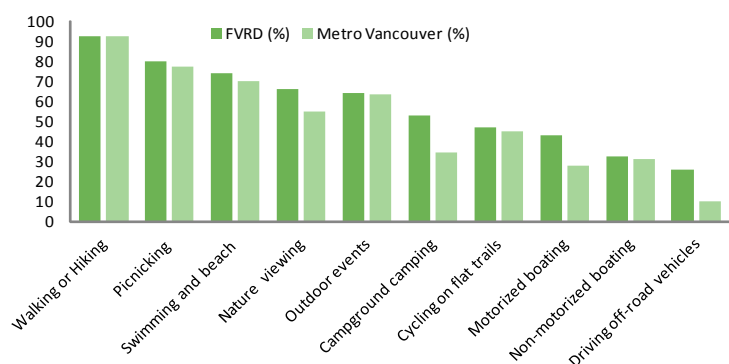
- Metro Vancouver and FVRD residents place considerable value on outdoor recreation - 57% consider it to be very important - and are among the most active of British Columbians.
- Fraser Valley residents engage in a greater variety of outdoor activities than Metro Vancouver residents.
- Residents use parks and open space almost once a week (an average resident makes 41 visits annually).
- Park visits are increasing faster than the rate of population growth.
- FVRD residents tend to participate in activities that are more active, physical and which require more equipment (camping, boating, mountain-biking, etc.)

Findings indicate increasing demand for outdoor recreation opportunities. In the Lower Mainland regional park visits are increasing at a rate faster than population growth, signifying an increase in the number of times residents visit parks each year. If the total number of per capita visits to FVRD regional parks remains at 2003 levels, regional parks could see a 37% increase in total visits - adding up to an estimated 355,000 additional visits by 2041. Provincial parks can expect even greater visitor numbers in the future (*BC Parks*). These numbers illustrate the need to address the growing demand for recreation in FVRD just to relieve the strain on existing parkland.

Activity Preferences and Park Use

Walking/Hiking is the most common outdoor activity, with 92% of respondents participating. Picnicking and swimming closely follow. The most popular outdoor recreation activities tend to be relatively undemanding in terms of effort, skill or special equipment. That said, FVRD residents tend to participate in more strenuous activities. The most notable differences in preferred activities between Metro and FVRD residents, was the higher level of participation on the part of FVRD residents in camping, boating and driving off-road vehicles. When respondents were asked what activities they planned to participate in more in the coming year, walking, cycling and camping were at the top of the list. People cited time constraints and weather as the most common deterrents for not visiting parks and open spaces more often.

Recreation Activities Participated in During Past 12 Months



Source: Phase I Demand Analysis Report, Regional Outdoor Recreation Opportunities Study, 2011



Cheam Lake Wetlands

Changing Demographic = Changing Recreational Priorities

An aging population will likely influence the kinds of outdoor activities that will draw tourists in the coming decades. Aging baby boomers make up the largest share of the tourism market. As this sector grows so will the market for tourism that provides cultural, educational and experiential activities. Accessibility is likely to become a major factor in travel and tourism. Another trend expected to affect tourism is an increase in environmental awareness and social responsibility. This will not only provide growth opportunities in the eco-tourism industries, but is expected to influence all corners of the tourism market with demands for better waste and energy management from service providers. (*Opportunity BC 2020: Tourism Sector Report for BC*)

Demographic Characteristics of Park Users

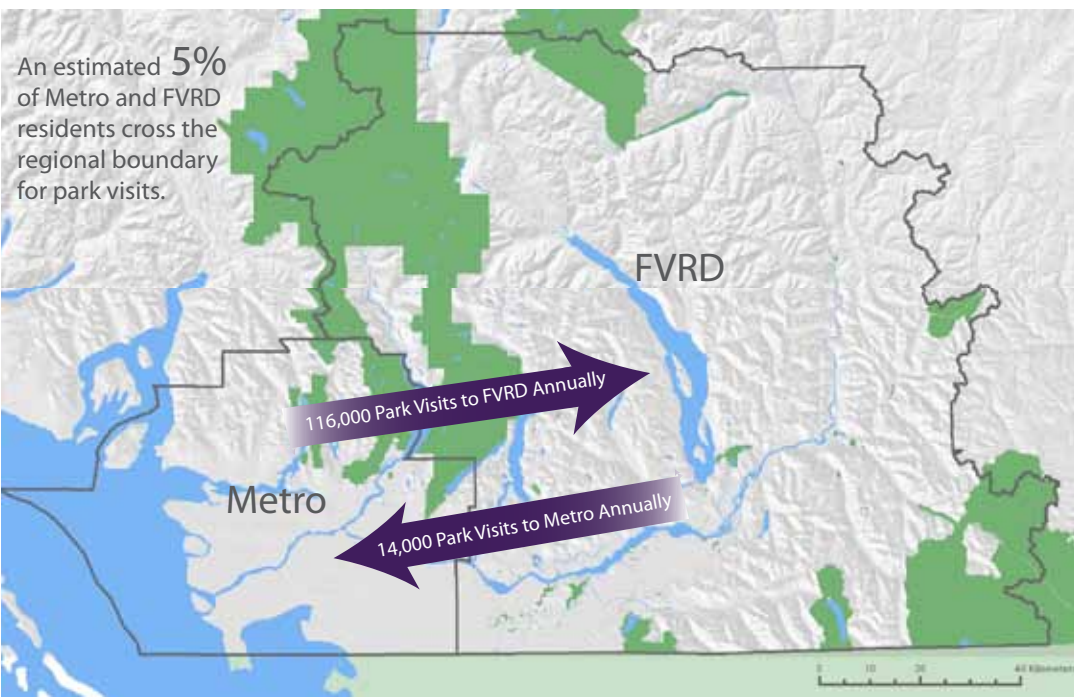
	Most likely to use parks	Less Likely to use parks
Age Range	25-34 & 45-54	16-24 & 55-74
Employment Status	Employed	Unemployed
Ethnic Origin	Canadian born	Chinese & South Asian Immigrants
Income level	Above average	Below average
Family structure	With children	Without children

Due to the region's aging population, it is anticipated that park use will begin to shift from more active recreation to more accessible passive recreation in the coming decade. Ethnic shifts in the population may also affect park usage as minority populations tend to utilize parks more for picnicking and organized sports.

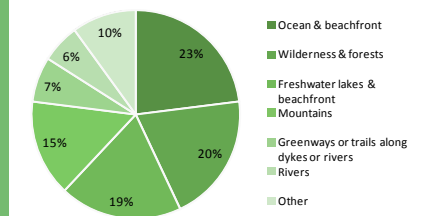
Getting To and From Parks

The overwhelming majority of park visits are made by car. 79% of park visits made by FVRD residents are made by private vehicle. Metro Vancouver relies on vehicles to a slightly lesser extent using private vehicles 63% of the time. Noticeable exceptions were respondents over 75, who were most likely to walk to parks, and youth who tended to use transit. People in both regions are willing to travel an hour or more to their destination for an outdoor recreation day trip. As the population ages, maintaining an adequate level of access to parks may require providing new options for transport to and from recreation areas.

Flow of Park Visitors Between the FVRD and Metro Van



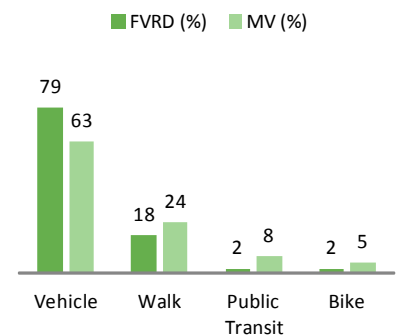
Preferred Landscapes for Recreation (%)



Top 5 Most Important Park Facilities

- Washrooms 71%
- Picnic Areas 12%
- Water Fountains 10%
- Food Concessions 8%
- Garbage Cans & Recycling Bins 8%

Mode of Transportation to Parks



Source: Phase I Demand Analysis Report, Regional Outdoor Recreation Opportunities Study, 2011



River Rafting in the FVRD

INVESTING IN OUR REGION

THE BENEFITS OF OPEN SPACE

Promoting Healthy and Active Lifestyles

Access to parkland and recreational opportunities is highly valued by FVRD residents. Every outdoor recreation experience is as unique as each individual participant, but whether spending time with family or finding quiet in nature, the sum of these experiences can benefit society as a whole. An extensive and well managed outdoor recreation system has the potential to improve overall health, attract business and tourism, protect natural resources and promote environmental awareness.

Current Initiatives to Promote Active Living in the FVRD

Abbotsford Discovery Trail

The Discovery Trail is a community driven initiative to promote active, healthy living among Abbotsford residents of all ages. The proposed 30 km all-season trail, once finished, will run the length of the community providing an alternative transportation corridor and promoting activities such as walking and biking. The project is funded in part by Local Motion and is supported by the City and the Province. (*Abbotsford Parks Recreation and Culture*)

Kidsport Comes to the FVRD

The municipalities of Mission, Chilliwack, and Abbotsford have all developed partnerships with the national program Kidsport, which gives financial assistance to children that would otherwise be prevented from participating in organized sport due to financial constraints.

(www.kidsportcanada.ca)

Cycling the Chilliwack Dykes



Getting outdoors is one of the best ways to maintain a healthy and active lifestyle. Active living can reduce the burden of chronic disease and obesity in our society. This is particularly relevant to the Fraser Valley where rates of physical activity are lower than average in B.C. and almost 50% of the population is considered overweight or obese.¹ Contact with nature in any setting, urban or rural, has been shown to have a positive effect on blood pressure, cardiovascular disease, mental health and stress. This too, has clear implications for the region as the two most prevalent chronic conditions in the FVRD are depression and hypertension², while the second highest cause of death after cancer in the FVRD is cardiovascular disease.³



Mission Waterfront

Encouraging outdoor recreation could help reduce the burden on the health care system. As one study put it, "the links [between exposure to nature and stress reduction] are sufficiently strong that researchers and practitioners in health related fields are now beginning to identify parks and recreation as a health service."⁴ In 2001, the Public Health Agency of Canada estimated that just a 1% increase in physical activity in Canada could save \$10.2 million for heart disease and \$877,000 for adult-onset diabetes.

Focusing efforts on the younger population may be one of the most effective ways to promote healthier lifestyles. Studies have shown that children who participate in recreation and outdoor activities are as much as three times more likely to be active as adults.⁵ Several programs that promote active living for both children and adults are in place throughout the FVRD (See left panel).

There are indications that our built environment has contributed to the decrease in levels of physical activity. A recent Lower Mainland study found that people living in neighbourhoods with good sidewalks, stores, parks, schools and workplaces within walking distance of homes, were half as likely to be overweight than those living in places without those amenities.⁶ Encouraging development practices that place emphasis on alternative transportation, and maintaining parks and open spaces which provide places for people to be active both in their own neighborhoods and throughout the region, can positively influence health.

Healthy Communities support Healthy Families Initiative - Under this initiative, the Province is working with communities interested in promoting healthier living to develop plans that address a community-identified issue such as increasing physical activity, healthy eating, or healthier built environments. (www.healthyfamiliesbc.ca)

¹ Canadian Community Health Survey, Statistics Canada

² BC Ministry of Health Services (MoHS), Primary Health Care (PHC) Patient Registries as of Nov. 2009, provided by Fraser Health

³ VISTA database, BC Vital Statistics Agency, ministry of Health Services, provided by Fraser Health

⁴ Godbey, Geoffrey. *Outdoor Recreation, Health, and Wellness: Understanding and Enhancing the Relationship*. Outdoor Resources Review Group, 2009

⁵ Outdoor Recreation Participation Top Line Report 2010, Outdoor Foundation.

⁶ Frank, L.D., M. Winters, B. Patterson and C.L. Craig. *Promoting Physical Activity Through Healthy Community Design*. UBC Active Transportation Collaboratory, 2009.

Protecting Our Natural Legacy

Parks and open space protect a wide array of ecosystems and natural features including wetlands, waterfalls, mountains, and rivers, which in turn protect wildlife habitat and biodiversity in the region. Open space can link habitat and provide migration corridors through more populated areas minimizing disruption of natural cycles. In addition, forested areas act as carbon sinks, improving air quality and mitigating the effects of climate change.

As a gateway to wilderness where people can interact with nature on an individual level, parks become an ideal venue for environmental education. Continuous contact with nature promotes increased understanding of the natural world and fosters environmental awareness and long-term stewardship. It enables people to make connections between consumption and natural resources and to better understand their potential impact on the environment.

Determining the Dollar Value of Parks and Recreation

In recent years there has been a concerted effort to estimate the intrinsic value of greenspace in economic terms. By measuring the economic value of each land cover type in terms of its recreation and tourism benefits, one study found that the total recreation and tourism value derived from forests and wetlands in the Lower Mainland is as much as \$109 million annually.⁸ Though more studies are needed to substantiate this finding, this estimate can help decision-makers begin to see the potential benefits of parks and recreation on the regional economy.

Value of Ecosystem Services from a Recreation and Tourism Standpoint. Lower Mainland Study Area* (2005\$)

	Total value millions (\$)	Value per hectare (\$)
Forests	\$105	\$127
Wetlands	\$4	\$127
Farm-based	\$2	\$69

* Study area includes the Fraser Valley and Canyon, all of Harrison Lake, Metro Vancouver and the 'Sea-to-Sky', but excludes the northern forestlands in the FVRD.

Natural Capital in BC's Lower Mainland: Valuing the Benefits from Nature. David Suzuki Foundation and Pacific Parklands Foundation. 2010

Just as protecting our environmental assets can have a positive effect on the economy, environmental degradation can have negative consequences. One study estimated that just one poor visibility event in the Fraser Valley could result in tourism revenue losses of up to \$1.32 million. While less extreme air quality events are more common and associated revenue losses are less, the cumulative effect could be greater.⁹

Parks and open space benefit the region by helping to attract new businesses and employers. The availability of greenspace and recreational opportunities is often cited as a common indicator of quality of life. It is increasingly recognized that businesses look to locate in areas that are highly ranked in terms of high quality of life. The FVRD is well situated to take advantage of this. British Columbia consistently ranks at the top of the list for quality of life in the world. The proximity to wilderness and recreational opportunities, in combination with proximity to a major urban market, makes the Fraser Valley an ideal place to locate a business.

At the community level, parks have also been associated with increases in adjacent property values. A UBC study conducted in 1999 found that "proximity to greenways has a positive property value effect of 10-15%".¹⁰

⁸ *Natural Capital in BC's Lower Mainland: Valuing the Benefits from Nature.* David Suzuki Foundation and Pacific Parklands Foundation. 2010.

⁹ McNeill, R. & Roberge, A. *The Impact of Visual Air Quality on Tourism Revenues in Greater Vancouver and the Lower Fraser Valley.* 2000.

¹⁰ Quayle, Moura & Hamilton, Stan. *Corridors of Green and Gold: Impact of Riparian Suburban Greenways on Property Values.* 1999



Great Blue Heron

Great Blue Heron Nature Reserve Society: Combining Recreation and Environmental Education

The Chilliwack based non-profit Great Blue Heron Nature Reserve Society runs an interpretive nature centre within the Great Blue Heron Nature Reserve, a well established breeding colony for the Great Blue Heron. Located along the Vedder River, the Nature Reserve offers tours and educational programs and invites people to explore the reserve along the reserve's 9 km trail system. (www.chilliwackblueheron.com)

Sumas Mountain



NATURE-BASED TOURISM GROWING ECONOMIC POTENTIAL

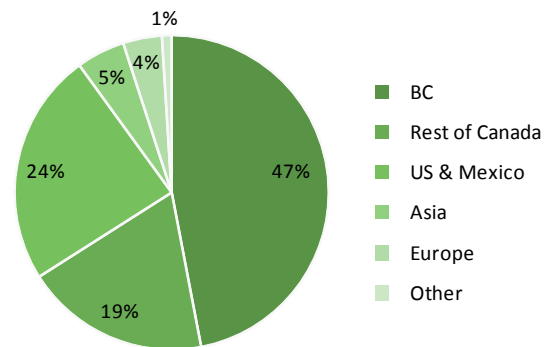
Tourism is the second largest income generator in the province. In 2010, tourism generated over \$13.4 billion in revenue in BC. Approximately 12% of the province's total tourism revenue can be attributed to nature-based tourism. According to Tourism British Columbia, over 1 million people participated in nature-based tourism in 2005, spending a total of 1.2 billion dollars. This was an almost 20% increase over the 966,000 people that participated in 2001. Nature-based tourism was also responsible for the creation of 20,776 jobs in 2005, and a contribution of \$782.9 million to the GDP. This upward trend is expected to continue.¹¹

The FVRD is perfectly situated to tap into this growing tourism industry. Many businesses in the region have already profited, but there is plenty of room to grow. The abundance of and accessibility to nature, the growing demand for recreation, and the close proximity to Vancouver, give the FVRD definite advantages. Data from Statistics Canada found that with a 17% growth rate, rural Metro-adjacent communities had the highest percent increase of tourism employment of all regions from 1996-2003.¹²

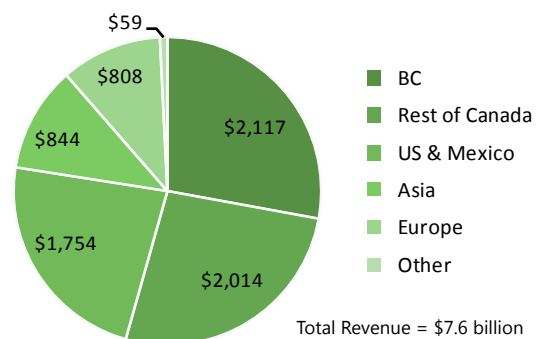
Several of the top priorities identified in BC's five year tourism strategy play directly to the strengths of the FVRD. Two priorities in particular stand out: adventure/eco-tourism and aboriginal tourism. Supporting initiatives in these two areas has the potential to support our communities with job creation and economic growth, while at the same time protecting our natural and cultural heritage.

The provincial tourism strategy identifies the top markets for adventure tourism as being Australia followed by BC, Alberta, Ontario, California, South Korea, Washington State, Germany and the UK. Aboriginal tourism shares the same potential markets with the exception of Australia, Washington State, and South Korea. This illustrates a shifting focus toward growing international tourism markets. Between 2004 and 2008, the number of international visitors (excluding US visitors) grew by just over 5%. Though accounting for only 10% of total visitors to BC, international visitors brought in 25% of total tourism revenues. During the same period the number of US visitors decreased by 19%. That said, Canadian & US visitors continue to make up almost 90% of the total market, and should by no means be discounted.¹³

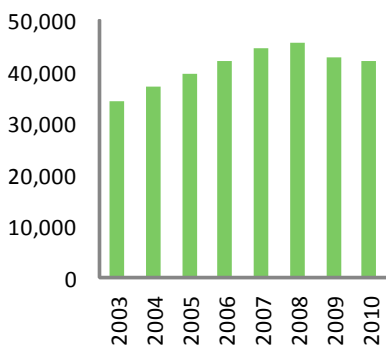
Total Visitors to BC by Origin (2007)



Visitor Expenditures in BC by Origin (2007)
(\$millions)



FVRD Room Revenue 2003-2010
(\$000's)



Room revenue is a common indicator used to assess the state of the tourism industry. Despite a dip in 2009, room revenue has grown in the FVRD by 19% in the last eight years. (BC Stats)

“Support transportation improvements to facilitate growth in the tourism industry.”
- Choices for our Future

¹¹ *Economic Value of the Commercial Nature-Based Tourism Industry in BC*, Pacific Analytics and Research Services, Tourism British Columbia, 2004.

¹² Beshiri, Roland. *Tourism Employment in Rural Canada*. Rural & Small Town Canada Analysis Bulletin. (Statistics Canada) Vol. 5, No. 8, January 2005.

¹³ *The Value of Tourism in British Columbia: Trends from 1998 to 2008*, Tourism British Columbia, 2009.

TOURISM GROWTH SECTORS INITIATIVES IN THE FRASER VALLEY

Amazing potential for a multitude of nature-based activities

This region has only just begun to realize the vast potential for outdoor recreation and tourism. Highlighted below are three growing branches of the tourism industry and examples of Fraser Valley-based initiatives that are tapping into that potential:

Farm-based Recreation

In the FVRD agriculture-based tourism is a booming industry. Residents and visitors alike have a plethora of opportunities to recreate in a farm setting: visiting petting zoos, u-pick farms, corn mazes and educational centres. According to one study, farm-based recreation in the Lower Mainland has been valued at \$2.1 million annually.¹⁴

Circle Farm Tours - To promote agri-tourism in the Fraser Valley, a partnership of six communities including Abbotsford, Chilliwack, and Agassiz/Harrison Mills, makes up the Farm Circle Tours Initiative. This marketing campaign provides residents and tourists with a free road map that gives directions to and information about a variety of specialty farm-gate vendors, open air markets, local eateries, heritage sites, fairs, and other special events in each community. (www.circlefarmtour.com)

Aboriginal & Cultural Tourism

Aboriginal tourism is growing alongside an interest in cultural tourism experiences. Aboriginal tourism has experienced increased exposure in the last five years, especially with the Olympic Games in 2010, and the sector is expected to grow in the coming years. Around 3.9 million tourists are projected to include Aboriginal experiences in their B.C. trip plans by 2012.¹⁵ Cultural tourism also includes the many historical sights and cultural events sprinkled throughout the Fraser Valley.

Sts'ailes Tourism Initiatives - Sts'ailes (formerly Chehalis Indian Band) has been working to develop a strategic tourism plan that would benefit the community in terms of economic growth and job creation while protecting the natural environment and educating visitors about Sts'ailes. Already successful components of this plan include the Sasquatch Crossing Ecolodge, which is tapping into the growing ecotourism sector and the Sts'ailes Lhawathet Lalem Healing Retreat Center which hosts a variety of events and offers cultural and recreational programs for guests. Sts'ailes also takes part in the annual Fraser Valley Bald Eagle Festival, offering demonstrations and activities that invite visitors to learn more about the Sts'ailes culture. (www.stsailesdevcorp.com/tourism/sasquatch-crossing-eco-lodge)

Adventure & Experiential Tourism

Older generations are increasingly looking for experiential and educational experiences, while more active and often higher-risk adventure tourism remains popular among younger crowds. The organizations below represent collaborative efforts to market both active and more passive opportunities in the region.

Travel the Canyon - Travel the Canyon is a tourism website that started as an online travel guide for the Fraser Canyon and has rapidly expanded since its inception in 2005 to include a much larger area. Supported by local businesses, the website pools resources to showcase the many attractions in the region - from crossing Hell's Gate on the Airtram in Boston Bar to rafting expeditions in Yale to witnessing Harrison Hot Springs annual sand sculpture competition. (www.travelthecanyon.com)

Handpicked Tourism - Launched in March 2011, 'Handpicked in the Valley' is a tourism initiative developed by Tourism Abbotsford, Tourism Chilliwack and Tourism Langley to promote tourism to the Fraser Valley region. By collaborating, the organizations can pool resources and target a larger audience while showcasing the region as a whole. (www.handpickedinthevalley.com)

Rural Tourism Potential

Rural Communities can offer outdoor recreation opportunities that many visitors come to British Columbia to experience. Between 1996-2003 rural areas experienced 15% tourism growth on average.¹¹ That was slightly higher than tourism growth in urban centres in Canada during the same period. In its five-year tourism strategy (2012-2016) the Province recognizes the role of rural communities in the tourism industry. The Ministry of Jobs, Tourism and Innovation offers several programs, such as the Community Tourism Opportunities Program, that provide marketing and financial support to community based tourism initiatives.



¹⁴ *Natural Capital in BC's Lower Mainland: Valuing the Benefits from Nature*. David Suzuki Foundation and Pacific Parklands Foundation. 2010.

¹⁵ *Aboriginal Tourism BC Blueprint Strategy: Tourism Performance Review 2006-2010*. 2011

“Support the development of a regional park system that...links up to federal, provincial, municipal and GVRD park systems and greenway initiatives.”

- Choices for Our Future



EXPERIENCE THE FRASER: LOWER FRASER RIVER CORRIDOR PROJECT

Experience the Fraser (ETF) is a recreational, cultural and heritage project that seeks to connect communities to and along the Fraser River from Hope to the Salish Sea. At its heart, ETF is defined by over 550 kilometres of proposed trail and a recreational blueway with amenities to support both land and water-based use. The proposed trail will connect existing points of interest, amenities and features along the Lower Fraser River Corridor and, once in place, will also be a catalyst for others to package and add their own Fraser River experiences. The result will be the creation of a unique product that provides unprecedented opportunities to celebrate shared culture and heritage; showcase the Lower Fraser River Corridor, its landscapes, features, wildlife and people as one of the great river communities of the world; link and create a suite of outstanding tourist attractions; encourage active and healthy living; and enhance land and water-based recreational opportunities.

The Vision

Experience the Fraser invites the world to “*experience and explore the dynamic Lower Fraser River Corridor from Hope to the Salish Sea... to celebrate the spirit and stories of its varied landscapes, diverse communities and rich natural and cultural heritage.*”

The Concept

The ETF Concept Plan lays out the framework for infrastructure to support a range of land and water-based recreational and cultural opportunities that would appeal to residents and stimulate tourism along the river corridor from Hope to the Salish Sea. A proposed “Canyon to Coast” Trail and Recreational Blueway will facilitate an experiential journey through the Lower Fraser River Corridor along which stories would be revealed about the river’s ecology, people, history, communities, and industry. Existing recreational, cultural and interpretive attractions and points of interest are captured as “amenity and feature points” along the Trail and Blueway, and new and enhanced amenities and experiences are recommended to support and strengthen the overall experience. It also presents an Illustrative Foundational Program that once completed would serve to define an Experience the Fraser identity and brand, and provide a solid presence and framework from which to continue to build the project.



A HOPE	C HARRISON - HOT SPRINGS	E STEVILLES - CHEHALIS	G CHILLIWACK WATERFRONT	I MISSION WATERFRONT	K STAVE	M PORT
B SEABIRD ISLAND	D ROSEDALE - POPKUM	F HARRISON MILLS	H SARROXTOWN	J ABBOTSFORD	L FORT LANGLEY	N BURNABY

District of Mission Spirit Square and Trail Demonstration Project

Opened to the public on May 15, 2010, the Spirit Square at Jack Poole Harbourside Park marks one of the first stages in Mission’s riverfront revitalization. The project features a demonstration trail segment and a new public gathering space along the Mission waterfront.

FVRD partnered with the District of Mission to develop the Demonstration Project as the first new trail segment for Experience the Fraser Project. The Demonstration Project and Experience the Fraser will promote active living in the Fraser Valley through enhancing outdoor recreation opportunities as well as connecting residents and visitors with their communities, nature and the river.



Building Connectivity

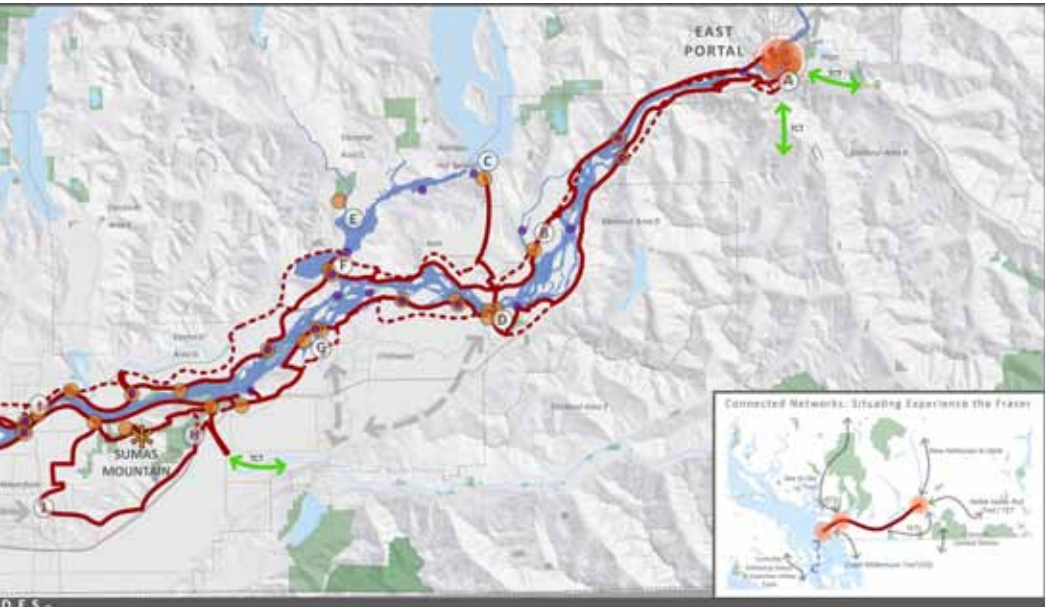
The Experience the Fraser Concept builds upon a strong base of existing infrastructure, amenities, features and Fraser River attractions. Approximately 43% of the proposed “Canyon to Coast” Trail is in place incorporating segments provided by regional districts, First Nations, municipalities and others. There are 15 sanctioned boat launches along this stretch of the river and many riverfront parks that provide water access and amenities. There are a number of cultural and heritage attractions and festivals for residents and visitors alike and several businesses that rent bicycles, boats and offer tours. Experience the Fraser is not starting from scratch. ETF seeks to fill connectivity gaps and add to available Fraser River experiences.

There are four goals that guide the realization of the Experience the Fraser vision:

- Goal 1 - Connect Hope to the Salish Sea
- Goal 2 - Link and inspire experiences along the river
- Goal 3 - Develop enduring and committed partnerships
- Goal 4 - Build and deepen connections to the river

Aligning with BC’s five year Tourism Strategy: Gaining the Edge.

Promoting leadership through partnership and coordination, and creating world class visitor experiences are two actions identified in BC’s five year tourism strategy as key to increasing visitor volume, revenue, and employment across the province. ETF exemplifies both, as it is a multi-faceted project unifying local and regional tourism initiatives under one name. ETF has the potential to inspire collaboration throughout the region, use resources efficiently to tap into many different markets, and offer a wide variety of activities including touring vacations, city experiences, aboriginal tourism, and outdoor adventure/eco-tourism – all experiences which, according to the Province’s Tourism Strategy, build upon BC’s competitive advantage and are identified as top priorities in terms of expanding tourism in the province. ETF also supports the draft Provincial Trail Strategy and Aboriginal Tourism BC’s Blueprint Strategy.



HANNEY	O SURREY BEND	Q COQUITLAM WATERFRONT	S BROWNVILLE	U TILBURY	W STEVESTON	Y TSAWASSEN
ON	P CITADEL	R NEW WESTMINSTER QUAY	T QUEENSBOROUGH	V RIVERPORT	X LADNER	Z FERRY



Fishing on the Vedder River

“Encourage the development and coordination of municipal and rural walking and bicycle path plans.”

- Choices for Our Future

Current Park Acquisition Priorities

High priority is given to land which:

- could provide trails, especially linear green spaces that would link recreation facilities
- is representative of significant ecosystems or landscapes in the region
- provides lake or river frontage
- has significant natural or conservation values
- is within easy access of the resident population
- provides year-round outdoor recreation potential
- could be used to enhance existing recreational resources
- is already a *de facto* regional park - but is without legally secure public access.

(FVRD Regional Parks Plan 2003)

KEEPING UP WITH DEMAND FILLING IN THE GAPS

Land Use and Park Planning to meet future demand

With 1.4 million additional residents in the Lower Mainland anticipated over the next thirty years, planning for the projected increase in demand for parks and outdoor recreation must take place today to ensure continued quality of experience. Sound parks and land use planning will help to protect any investment in the nature-based tourism industry by either public, private or First Nations sectors. The FVRD is scheduled to begin updating the region's Parks Plan in 2012. In addition to outlining long-term and day-to-day parks management, the Plan will consider how to best address some of the following issues:

New Parkland and Amenities

Future demand will require the acquisition of new parkland. The current regional parks plan has existing guidelines for acquiring parkland and has identified priorities based on demand (see left panel). In addition to new parkland, existing amenities must be assessed for adequacy. While most respondents to the recent demand survey were satisfied with park facilities, there are some concerns as to washroom and parking amenities. Many respondents also cited a need for more information on park locations, trail maps and signage within the parks, and operating hours.

Increasing Public Awareness

Park identification, information availability and infrastructure were revealed as key recreation issues in the Demand Analysis. The study found that awareness of existing parks and recreational opportunities is quite limited. Residents are not readily able to differentiate regional parks from other park systems or open spaces; nor do most know the names or locations of individual parks. In fact, one-in-four residents could not name any regional or major park. Possibly for this reason, 13-14% of residents feel that information on parks is lacking or inadequate. Strategies to combat this lack of awareness will need to be considered in future park plans.



Along the Fraser River

FACING CHALLENGES AND INVITING OPPORTUNITY

Improving Accessibility

Accessibility is likely to become a top priority for park planning in the future. Seniors, people with disabilities, low-income residents and minority groups all tend to have less access to parks. New park plans will have to consider ways to increase both the number of people who have access to parks and the ways in which people are able to access parks, i.e. walking and biking. Addressing these issues will also have implications for park design, layout and improvements.

Supporting Tourism Initiatives

With a growing demand for outdoor recreation opportunities and the proximity of a large population, the Fraser Valley Regional District is ideally situated to build on an already successful nature-based tourism industry. Supporting local endeavours to tap into this sector will strengthen the local economy while protecting the natural assets that draw visitors and residents to participate in outdoor recreation.

Minimizing Impact, Maximizing Experience

While the benefits of using parks and recreation areas far outweigh the negatives, it is still important to consider the potentially negative impacts that can occur with improper use. Common problems include the spread of invasive species, illegal dumping, and damage to vegetation and soil caused by going off-trail. Conflict between humans and wildlife also remains a big concern. In British Columbia run-ins with cougars and bears are frequent, distressing to both parties, and frequently end in wildlife being destroyed. In 2010 over 653 bears were killed in BC due to conflict between humans and bears. The Bear Aware program, and others like it, is designed to educate people on how to minimize contact and conflict with wildlife. Widespread public education campaigns developed in collaboration with municipalities, parks and businesses can minimize these negative impacts and create a more enjoyable environment for everyone.



The spread of invasive plants, encounters with wildlife and illegal dumping can be minimized with increased awareness.



Regional Snapshot Series:
Parks and Recreation

Outdoor Recreation & Tourism in the
Fraser Valley Regional District

January 2012



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The Regional Snapshot Series for the Fraser Valley Regional District is designed to provide the public with greater insight into the forces which are shaping growth and change in the region today. For a full list of documents currently available in the series, please visit us on the web at: www.fvrd.bc.ca