

Fraser Valley Regional District
Regional Parks Strategic Plan 2014-2024





Neilson Regional Park, Mission

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Cover Photo: Cheam Ridge Regional Trail, EA E

Executive Summary

An extensive and well-managed regional parks system can offer residents and visitors places where they can connect with nature, participate in recreational activities, and find respite from their busy daily lives. The Regional Parks Strategic Plan is a long-term vision intended to provide direction for the Regional Parks System over the next ten years. This plan, which replaces the 2003 plan, identifies park priorities and lists actions that can be taken to guide park management, improvements, and any park acquisitions that may occur over the next ten years.

While regional parks is the focus of this plan, it is recognized that they are just one component of a larger, more comprehensive network of parks including federal, provincial, municipal, and other public lands. This plan considers regional parks from within this greater context to ensure that regional parks are filling a niche, while at the same time strengthening the park system as a whole.

The Current Regional Parks System

The existing Fraser Valley Regional District (FVRD) parks system consists of ten regional parks, one interregional park (managed jointly by Metro Vancouver and the FVRD), and three regional trails, totaling 1790 Hectares (4,426 ac). Each park is classified into one of three categories: Recreation Areas, Natural Areas, and Regional Trails and Greenways (see table).

Coming Trends, Challenges, and Opportunities

The preparation of this plan included extensive research and analysis of current park trends, challenges and opportunities facing the regional park system today. It is anticipated that demand for outdoor recreation will continue to climb at a rate faster than population growth, putting added

Existing Regional Parks

Classification	Park	Location
Recreation Areas	Cascade Falls Regional Park	EA F
	Dewdney Nature Park	EA G
	Island 22 Regional Park	Chilliwack
	Neilson Regional Park	Mission
	Fraser River Heritage Park	Mission
	Harrison Hot Springs Boat Launch	Harrison H.S.
Natural Areas	Cheam Lake Wetlands Regional Park	EA D
	Hillkeep Regional Park	Chilliwack
	Sumas Mountain Interregional Park	Abbotsford
	Thacker Regional Park	Hope
	Thompson Regional Park	EA E
Regional Trails & Greenways	Cheam Ridge Regional Trail	EA E
	Elk/Thurston Regional Trail	EA E
	Kettle Valley Rail Regional Trail - Hope	EA B

pressure on the parks system. Changing demographics (i.e. an aging population) will also influence park use, increasing the demand for more passive park activities such as walking, nature viewing, and picnicking.

A multi-pronged public consultation process encouraged park users to offer their input regarding regional park use, potential improvements, and future priorities. This process revealed a number of preferences and gaps that were used to shape the plan. Some of the findings include:

- A preference for trails and wilderness areas
- Strong support for interpretive and educational programs
- A need for more access to rivers, lakes and streams

- A desire to expand the trail network for non-motorized, passive recreation
- A need to improve public awareness of/promote FVRD parks
- A need to improve the availability of information about FVRD parks both on-site and on-line
- A need to improve infrastructure, particularly washrooms
- An interest in expanding the parks system to include the Fraser Canyon
- Expanding existing parks and acquiring new parkland

- Boosts the economy by attracting tourists to the region
- Offers opportunities to learn about nature through educational and interpretive programs
- Is well managed and cost effective

The top priorities for existing parks include creating management plans for each individual park, and securing long-term lease agreements for parklands in order to ensure a return on any capital investments. The plan also includes a list of priorities for infrastructure improvements to be completed over the next 10 years.

For future parks, the plan includes a checklist of criteria for any potential parkland acquisition that occurs over the next ten years to ensure that any investment in parkland will contribute to the long term objectives of the Regional Park System.

The Future of the Regional Parks System

The ten year vision for the FVRD's Regional park system is as follows:

"The Fraser Valley Regional Parks system will provide diverse opportunities for outdoor recreation, protect and steward areas of cultural and ecological significance, and promote a stronger connection between people and nature in a way that is responsive to and enhances the quality of life of the region's changing population."

The objectives of a Regional Parks and Trails System are to create a regional park and trail network that:

- Offers a diversity of recreational opportunities and experiences
- Represents the diversity of landscapes and ecosystems
- Protects and stewards areas of ecological and cultural significance
- Provides an opportunity for all residents to access, connect with, and enjoy nature
- Promotes active living
- Links communities and regions through an extensive trail/greenway system

Implementation

Several action steps have been identified that will help to ensure progress is made toward achieving the above objectives over the next 10 years. These action steps include:

- Actively pursuing parkland acquisitions
- Strengthening partnerships
- Exploring opportunities to partner with First Nations
- Developing park specific management and operations plans
- Securing long-term land use agreements
- Reviewing existing land assets
- Promoting parks to resident and visitors
- Standardizing park signs and structures for branding purposes

- Supporting the Experience the Fraser initiative
- Maintaining a system to measure and track park use
- Establishing ecological stewardship programs
- Reviewing the Parks regulation bylaw

Funding

It is recognized that the reality of limited funding will be a challenge in the future. To address that, the plan includes a list of innovative strategies to secure funding in the future. These include:

- Evaluating the existing park user fee structure
- Creating a parks acquisition fund
- Pursuing grant funding
- Jointly funding acquisition or park improvements through partnerships
- Establishing a planned giving program
- Developing volunteer stewardship programs
- Establishing a commemorative gifts program
- Allocating development cost charges to parkland



Cascade Falls Regional Park, EA F

1. Introduction

1.1 Purpose

Parkland is highly valued by residents of the Fraser Valley Regional District (FVRD) for the wide variety of recreational opportunities it offers; as a way to access nature, for the health benefits it provides, and for the peace of mind that comes with knowing that land is protected for future generations. While each park experience is unique, the true value of parks is community and region wide. An extensive and well managed outdoor recreation system encourages active living and improves quality of life. Parks protect our unique ecology and natural environment and provide a venue for educating residents on the importance of stewardship. This region's incredible possibilities for outdoor recreation have the potential to benefit the local economy by attracting tourists, businesses, and residents. By planning ahead, we can ensure that important natural areas are protected, and that everyone, regardless of age, ethnicity, or physical ability, has the opportunity to take part in outdoor recreation and enjoy nature.



Thompson Regional Park, EA E

1.2 Context

The FVRD is comprised of six member municipalities and seven electoral areas and features a wide range of communities, from small rural hamlets to the fifth largest city in British Columbia. Situated in southern British Columbia just east of Metro Vancouver, the FVRD extends from Abbotsford in the west and past Hope in the east. It shares its southern border with the United States and extends just past Boston Bar to the north (see Figure 1). The Fraser Valley Regional District benefits from a large and diverse landscape of rugged mountains, world renowned rivers, and fertile valleys that offer a myriad of recreational opportunities including hiking, swimming, camping, biking, rafting and fishing. Approximately 22% of the region is parkland and protected area, however, much of that is difficult to access and far from population centres.

The FVRD is one of the fastest growing regional districts in British Columbia. The region is currently home to 296,000 residents. Between 2011 and 2041 the population is expected to increase by 60% to around 475,000. Over the same period, neighbouring Metro Vancouver is expected to grow from 2.2 to 3.4 million, an increase of 54%. There will be added pressure on the existing parks system as the burgeoning population of the Lower Mainland looks eastward to the Fraser Valley for recreational opportunities and a chance to experience nature.

1.3 Scope & History of the Plan

The Regional Parks Strategic Plan builds on a long history of park planning in the Lower Mainland. Many of the ideas put forth in the 1966 Regional Parks Plan for the Lower Mainland continue to be relevant today. Now, as then, "with rapid urbanization and increased leisure time, there will be even greater pressures on our outdoor recreation areas in the future." (Parks Plan, 1966) The plan stresses the need to plan ahead and expand the parks system to provide for future demand. The FVRD's 2003 Regional Parks Plan stressed many of the same factors and was intended to guide the develop-



Figure 1. Map of Parks and Protected Areas in the FVRD

ment of the regional park system to ensure that it could adequately meet future demand while being responsive to challenges and opportunities that may arise. This plan continues that common legacy through the lens of today's realities, trends, demographics, and demands.

This plan covers all regional parks that fall within the boundaries of the Fraser Valley Regional District, with the exception of those located within the City of Abbotsford. Those parks are currently managed by Metro Vancouver. However, Sumas Mountain Interregional Park, the first and only designated Interregional Park in the province, which crosses the boundary between Abbotsford and FVRD Electoral Area G, is jointly managed by Metro Vancouver and FVRD.

Municipal and Provincial Parks are outside the jurisdiction of the FVRD and are therefore not included in the plan. In addition, the FVRD manages a handful of Electoral Area Community Parks, which are comparable to municipal parks in terms of their scope and size. These parks are included in the Official Community Plans of the Electoral Areas in which they are located, and will be addressed separately through a FVRD Community Parks Plan.

It is recognized that regional parks are part of a larger parks system and cannot be considered in isolation. Creating a truly effective regional park system will necessitate shaping a regional parks system that complements and connects with Electoral Area, municipal, and provincial parks and recreation areas located within the region and neighbouring Metro Vancouver.

This plan profiles the existing regional parks system, identifies priorities for improvements to existing parks, and outlines criteria for future parkland acquisition. In addition, it identifies common overarching stewardship/management priorities and outlines an implementation process.



Douglas Firs, Sumas Mountain Interregional Park, EA G & Abbotsford

1.4 Parks and Open Space in the Region

While this plan focuses primarily on regional parks, it is important to understand the broader context. Provincial, regional, and municipal parks, together with lands managed by other agencies, create a larger network of parks spanning the Lower Mainland (See Figure 1). Each park, whether a tot lot or a large tract of wilderness, fills a unique role. Linking these parks will ultimately create a more accessible, comprehensive and responsive parks system. Recognizing that some overlap is inevitable, there are certain characteristics that define each park type. These are described below:

Regional Parks

Regional parks are generally considered to have three functions: to protect the natural landscape, to complement municipal recreation areas and to contribute to open space and greenway connections throughout the re-

gion. Regional parks 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 are located in proximity to population centres but tend to attract visitors from throughout the region. Each park has regional significance, whether recreational, ecological, or cultural. Amenities vary with each regional park depending on its focus. Regional parks make up only a fraction of parks and protected areas in the FVRD (see Table 1).

Community Parks

Municipal and Electoral Area parks tend to be smaller in size and greater in numbers. They are located within population centres and serve the local residents of a neighbourhood or municipality. While there may be a natural component, the primary role of community parks is to provide for daily recreational needs at a local level. Amenities commonly include sports fields, playgrounds, and neighbourhood walking trails. In the FVRD there are currently over 200 community parks.

Provincial Parks

Provincial parks tend to be much larger in size and are generally located farther from population centres. Provincial parks draw visitors from a wider area and visitors tend to stay longer. Provincial parks are often situated around a unique landscape feature (i.e. waterfall, lakes, etc.), have a wilderness component and provide a variety of recreational opportunities. The vast majority of parkland in the FVRD is in provincial parks (93%). Most provincial parkland is located on the edges of the region and farther from population centres. Two exceptions are Cultus Lake and Chilliwack Lake Provincial Parks which are extremely popular and are at or nearing carrying capacity.

Other Public Lands

A handful of other agencies own or manage lands for public outdoor recreation. BC Hydro offers limited public use along a number of its reservoirs.

UBC allows public use on select lands set aside as nature reserves or for research purposes. In addition to provincial parks, the Province has Recreation Areas, Ecological Reserves, and areas of Crown land that protect wildlands and, in some cases, are available for limited public use.

Table 1. Parks and Protected Areas by number and count in the FVRD

Parks and Protected Areas in the FVRD		
Jurisdiction	Number	Hectares (Acres)
Regional Parks (FVRD)	14	1,790 (4,426)
Recreation Areas (Provincial)	2	12,284 (30,354)
Provincial Parks	25	275,462 (680,681)
Municipal Parks	245	839 (2,072)
Greenspace	7	36 (90)
Ecological Reserves (Provincial)	10	2738 (6,767)
Conservancies	1	2,477 (6,120)
Protected Areas	1	65 (160)
Total		295,691 (730,668)
Total Area of FVRD		1,336,100
% of Parkland and Protected Areas		22%

In the past, a ratio between the amount of available regional public parkland and a region's population was used to determine how much parkland was adequate. While this method is no longer considered an accurate measure due to varying circumstances among regions, this ratio can still be used as a baseline for comparison. For example, the FVRD currently has 6 ha (14.8 ac)* of regional parkland per 1,000 people. To maintain this same ratio while keeping up with population growth, the FVRD would have to provide an additional 1050 ha (2,594 ac) of regional parkland by 2041.

*The calculation does not include acreage of Aldergrove Lake and Matsqui Regional Parks as they are managed by Metro Vancouver but does include the total population of Abbotsford.



Dewdney Regional Park, EA G

1.5 Supporting Policies and Initiatives

The *Local Government Act*, section 176 (1)(d), gives regional districts the right to establish and operate parks. This FVRD regional parks function was formalized in 2004 with the approval of the Fraser Valley Regional District Regional Parks Service Area Conversion and Merger Bylaw No. 0615, 2004. The bylaw merged three former regional park service areas into one and gives the Fraser Valley Regional District the ability to recover related service costs through the requisition of funds by property tax and/or through the collection of fees.

The provision of regional parks comes from a larger desire on the part of the region and its communities to provide public access to recreational opportunities and protect public parkland. This sentiment is reflected in the FVRD's Regional Growth Strategy (RGS) and in each of the Official Community Plans (OCP) that represent the region's long-range vision.

Regional Growth Strategy

The 2004 RGS outlines policies to ensure that the region is working toward a common future. The current RGS supports "the development of a regional park system that is sensitive to agricultural and rural interests and links up with federal, provincial, municipal and Metro Vancouver park systems and greenway initiatives." The strategic parks plan will help to achieve this objective.

Official Community Plans

Official Community Plans provide long-range plans for defined areas within the region and in most cases include policies for existing and potential parklands. Within the Fraser Valley Regional District there are fourteen distinct OCP areas with distinct park priorities that pinpoint landscapes and features of significance throughout the region. Though each area is unique, common regional park priorities found within each OCP include:

- Reserving areas with significant recreation or conservation potential (including crown land) for future park development.
- Supporting acquisition of lands that provide access to waterbodies.
- Providing for walking and cycling access to park and recreational facilities for enjoyment of the natural environment.
- Conserving environmental assets such as unique natural features, distinctive landscapes, and areas with high recreation value.
- Supporting partnerships on park acquisition, management, and operations.

Other OCP policies relating to regional parks include:

- Preventing and mitigating any negative impacts nearby parkland may have on local communities (traffic, crime, noise, etc).
- Consulting residents on park development
- Supporting recreational opportunities that promote public health and provide economic benefits.
- Preserving natural views
- Establishing natural area preserves

OCP's also address community parks,. However, because they primarily serve residents of a localized area they are not included in this Plan.

Experience the Fraser

Experience the Fraser (ETF) is a recreational, cultural, and heritage initiative that extends along the Lower Fraser River Corridor from Hope to the Salish Sea. A joint initiative of the FVRD, Metro Vancouver, and the Province, the ETF concept plan expresses a vision for enhancing recreational opportunities in and along the Fraser River through the development of the Canyon to Coast trail and blueway. The geographic boundaries of the ETF initiative and the Regional Parks plan vary; however, both share common objectives that include improving access to the Fraser River and expanding trail networks through several communities in the Fraser Valley (see Figure 2). The parks plan supports the ETF initiative and encourages collaboration on projects that contribute to long-term recreation objectives in the region.



Figure 2. Experience the Fraser Concept Plan



Island 22 Regional Park, Chilliwack

1.6 Public Input

To gauge public demand for parks and trails, and to get a sense of public priorities, the FVRD, together with Metro Vancouver, completed a multi-year Regional Outdoor Recreation Opportunities Study (ORS) for the Lower Mainland in 2013. The data and information gained through the study was supplemented by two smaller scale park surveys conducted online and in person by FVRD staff.

The objectives of the Outdoor Recreation Study were to:

- Assess the region's ability to address outdoor recreation needs
- Determine how best to provide recreation opportunities that support active living
- Support decision making regarding land acquisitions, recreational services and facilities.

A wide variety of research methods, including focus groups, interviews, and both web-based and phone surveys were used to collect responses for the study. The study looked at all available parks and outdoor recreation activities, with particular emphasis on regional parks. Residents were asked about the outdoor recreation activities they currently engage in and the types of activities they plan to participate in in the future. Survey questions also asked about preferences for recreational landscapes and facilities, frequency of park use, distances traveled, etc.

The comprehensive ORS study was supplemented by three separate park surveys. The first two were conducted in 2012 as part of the RGS public engagement process. A general RGS survey conducted in person and online over the span of six months asked two questions specific to park use. In addition, a short park survey was conducted by the FVRD Parks department at six RGS open houses held throughout the region during the same period.

A third, longer-form survey was conducted in 2013 with the express purpose of gathering input for the Regional Parks Strategic Plan. A series of on-site park events were held to connect with park users and to find out what they value about parks, what improvements they would like to see, and what their top priorities are for regional parks in the future. Input was received from 244 park users. Input received from all of the above surveys and studies is reflected in this plan.



Island 22 Regional Park, Chilliwack

2 Existing Regional Parks and Trails

2.1 Park Classifications

FVRD Regional Parks are divided into three distinct classifications; Recreation Areas, Natural Areas, and Regional Trails (see Table 2). While all regional parks have elements of each, the classifications identify the primary use of each park and guide development and management accordingly.

Table 2. Park Classifications

Park Classifications	
Recreation Areas	Recreation Areas are valued primarily for the recreational opportunities they offer. Emphasis is placed on more intensive recreational activities, including but not limited to: picnicking, camping, cycling, boating, horseback riding, outdoors events, concerts, etc. Recreational Areas are closer to population centres for easy access, offer a wide range of facilities, and tend to have higher operating costs. (Example: Island 22)
Natural Areas	Natural Areas put emphasis on protecting ecological and other special features of the park. As such, any park amenities or uses should have a limited impact on ecology. Recreation should be limited to low-impact, non-motorized, passive recreation including: walking, cycling, backcountry riding and nature viewing that does not interfere with natural systems. (Example: Cheam Lake Wetlands)
Regional Trails	Regional Trails Include a wide variety of trail types from hiking trails in wilderness settings, to paved urban trails along the river. Trails are designated for low-impact, non-motorized recreation and ideally link parks and communities within the region. Cheam Ridge Trail and the Experience the Fraser initiative both fit within this category.

2.2 Regional Parks Currently Managed by the FVRD

There are currently ten Regional Parks, one Interregional Park and three Regional Trails managed by the FVRD Parks Department. They range in size from 2.5 hectares to 1,470 hectares and together total approximately 1,790 hectares (4,426 ac). Regional Parks are located in four of the six municipalities and five of the seven Electoral Areas. All are located in the southern half of the region where 96% of the region's population resides. See Table 3 for a description of existing Regional Parks and Trails.

The land tenure of FVRD's Regional Parks varies greatly. Some are owned by the FVRD; the rest are leased or represent a combination of ownership, lease agreements, and/or partnership agreements. Through an agreement with the Province, three Regional Trails situated on crown land are currently managed by FVRD parks.

In 2012, Sumas Mountain became the first Interregional Park in B.C. This park is unique in that it crosses the regional boundary between FVRD and Metro Vancouver. The park is made up of several parcels of land, some of which are owned by Metro Vancouver and the City of Abbotsford, and others which are under Crown land lease agreements with the Province. The recreational, ecological, and cultural significance of Sumas Mountain for the Lower Mainland compelled the two regional districts to create an Interregional Park. The planning and management of Sumas Mountain parklands is a collaborative effort between the two regional districts with support from the Sumas First Nation.

It should be noted that the FVRD also manages several small community parks. However, due to their limited regional draw and unique budgetary structure, these parks are outside the scope of this plan and will be addressed separately through a FVRD Community Parks Plan.

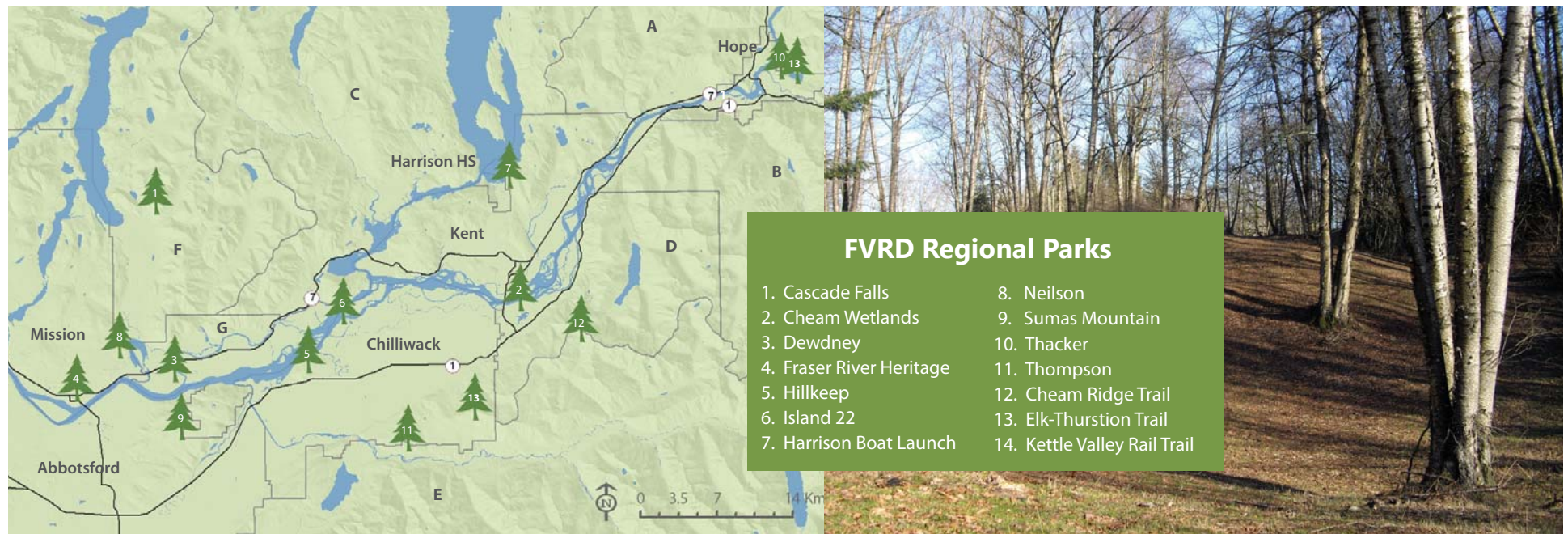


Figure 3. FVRD Regional Parks Map

Hillkeep Regional Park, Chilliwack

Table 3. Existing Regional Parks and Trails in the FVRD

Name	Location	Area	Land Tenure	Park Type & Primary Uses	Description
Recreation Areas					
Cascade Falls Regional Park	EA F	23.09 ha (57 ac)	3.4 ha FVRD owned, 33.45 ha Crown Land lease (30 yr renewed in 2010)	Recreation Area: Hiking, Nature viewing, pic-nicking	The main section of Cascade Falls Regional Park is just on Ridgeview Road. The main attraction is Cascade Falls, which drops an impressive 30 m into a large pool. A trail featuring stairs and varying in difficulty from easy to moderate leads to a viewing platform overlooking Cascade Falls. There are immediate plans to build a suspension bridge crossing the creek. Amenities include outhouses, picnic areas, and information kiosks. The park has been used more than once for filming.
Dewdney Nature Park	EA G	6.80 ha (16.8 ac)	Leased to FVRD by Dewdney Area Improvement District (3 yr renewed in 2013)	Recreation Area: Fishing, boating	Dewdney Nature Regional park is used mainly by anglers to access the Fraser River and Nicomen Slough. The park is popular in the fall with anglers fishing for coho salmon. During the fall, several species of shorebirds are common at the water's edge, and many bald eagles are seen feeding on spawning salmon. Amenities include a boat launch, parking area for trucks and trailers, an outhouse. A staffed gatehouse collects parking fees during the summer months.
Island 22 Regional Park	City of Chilliwack	45 ha (111 ac)	Leased by the City of Chilliwack (5 yr renewed in 2013)	Recreation Area: Equestrian facilities, bike park, boating, walking trails, fishing, dog park	Island 22 Regional Park serves a broad range of visitors from across the Lower Mainland that come to take advantage of the boat launch and equestrian facilities. During the peak fishing season, the 100 vehicle truck and trailer parking lot is often full. Several equestrian events occur annually in the park including the annual Labour Day event which attracts hundreds of riders. The park also offers a bike park and a dog off-leash area, the only facilities of their kind in the FVRD park system. Amenities include a picnic shelter, picnic tables, outhouses, and information kiosks. A gatehouse operates annually during the summer and early fall and collects parking fees

Name	Location	Area	Land Tenure	Park Type & Primary Uses	Description
Neilson	District of Mission	9.96 ha (24.6 ac)	Owned by FVRD	Recreation Area: Wildlife area, walking trails, picnicking	Neilson Regional Park is located on Hatzic Lake in Mission. The park is popular for large picnics and organized gatherings, and nature viewing. The eastern exposure of the park offers a magnificent view across Hatzic Lake and up the Fraser Valley to Mount Cheam. In early November chum and coho salmon spawn in Draper Creek which runs through the park. Bald eagles, deer and black bears are also frequently seen in the park. Amenities include a picnic shelter, picnic tables, potable water, flush toilets and approximately 2 km of walking trails.
Fraser River Heritage Park	District of Mission	16.6 ha (41 ac)	Owned by FVRD (managed by District of Mission since 1999)	Recreation Area: Events, Picnicking	Though the park is owned by the FVRD, the Fraser River Heritage Park does not currently function as a Regional Park. The park is run by the Mission Heritage Association. Located in Mission, the park contains a number of historical and cultural sites of interest including the Grotto of Our Lady Lourdes, the Oblate of Mary Immaculate Cemetery, and the Norma Kenney House, which houses the Mission Heritage Association. The park hosts several annual events including the Mission Folk Music Festival.
Harrison Boat Launch	Harrison Hot Springs	.8 ha (2 ac)	Owned by the Village of Harrison	Boat Launch	Harrison Boat Launch is located just east of the lagoon on Harrison Lake in the Village of Harrison Hot Springs. The launch area includes two concrete ramps with traction aids, a large parking lot, a central floating wharf, flush washrooms, and a floating sanitation pump out. A staffed gatehouse collects fees during the summer and early fall. Harrison Lake features, beaches, swimming, camping, water sports, sailing and resort accommodations.
Natural Areas					
Cheam Lake Wetlands Regional Park	EA D	107.12 ha (264.69 ac)	48.82 FVRD owned, 4.85 jointly owned (FVRD & Nature Trust of BC), 58.29 Crown Land	Natural Area: wildlife viewing, birding, Interpretive programs, picnicking, walking	Cheam Lake Wetlands Regional Park is comprised of lake, marsh and forest. It is popular for hiking, picnicking and bird watching and is home to many insect, mammal and bird species. The park's trail system is approximately 2 km long. It is ideal for all ages and features raised walkways and an elevated viewing platform. This park was designed and managed to protect sensitive habitat and wildlife. The FVRD offers an interpretive program for local schools on site. Amenities include an information kiosk, information shelter, pit toilets, seasonal running water, and picnic tables.

Name	Location	Area	Land Tenure	Park Type & Primary Uses	Description
Hillkeep Regional Park	City of Chilliwack	14.4 ha (35.6 ac)	2.7 jointly owned by FVRD and Chilliwack, 11.7 owned by Chilliwack	Natural Area: Walking Trails, scenic views	Acquired in 2012, Hillkeep is the newest addition to the regional park system. The existing and planned City 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.
Sumas Mountain Interregional Park	EA G & Abbotsford	1,470 ha (3632 ac)	715 - crown land lease 207 - City of Abbotsford (Remaining land managed by Metro Vancouver)	Natural Area: hiking, scenic views, Mountain Biking	Sumas Mountain Interregional Park is a 1,471 hectare park jointly managed by the FVRD and Metro Vancouver through an inter-regional agreement. The FVRD manages 715 hectares of parkland on the eastern flank in Electoral Area G. The park offers many recreational opportunities including hiking, mountain biking, and wildlife viewing. Improvements to the trail system are currently underway. The park also contains valuable fish and wildlife habitat as well as regionally significant plants and animals. Amenities include outhouses, information kiosks, and several viewpoints.
Thacker Regional Park	District of Hope	77.5 ha (191.5 ac)	11.04 owned by FVRD, 77.590 owned by UBC	Natural Area: wildlife viewing, salmon spawning, walking trails	Thacker Regional Park is situated at the base of Thacker Mountain near Kawkawa Lake. It is primarily a marsh area used for nature viewing and casual strolling and hiking. The park's 1 km trail is easy for all ages and is part of the Trans Canada Trail system which leads to the Othello Tunnels to the east. The park's spawning channels provide users the opportunity to see coho, pink and chum salmon in the fall months. Amenities include interpretive signs an outhouse and info kiosk.

Name	Location	Area	Land Tenure	Park Type & Primary Uses	Description
Thompson Regional Park	EA E	2.53ha (6.2 ac)	Owned by FVRD	Natural Area: Interpretive trails, picnicking	Thompson Regional Park is a 3 hectare park in Electoral Area E that serves as a focal point for recreational activities in the Chilliwack River Valley. A short trail with informative signs circles a salmon enhancement project. Amenities include a large picnic shelter, a large parking area, flush toilets and a trail to the Chilliwack/Vedder River.
Regional Trails					
Cheam Ridge Regional Trail	EA E	4.5 km	Crown land (managed by FVRD in partnership with Ch-ihl-kway-uhk Tribe and MNRO)	Regional Trail: Hiking	Cheam Ridge Regional Trail winds its way through beautiful alpine meadows up to the top of Mount Cheam, which offers unsurpassed views of the Valley below. The trail is rough with frequent steep sections and takes about three hours to reach the summit. Hiking season and road conditions vary due to snowpack levels, but the road, and most of the trail, are typically clear of snow by mid to late June.
Elk-Thurston Regional Trail	City of Chilliwack, EA D, EA E	15 km	Crown land (managed by FVRD in partnership with Ch-ihl-kway-uhk Tribe and MNRO)	Regional Trail: Hiking	Elk-Thurston Regional Trail is a popular sub alpine hike that starts in the forest and makes its way along the mountain ridge to Elk Summit and Mount Thurston.
Kettle Valley Regional Rail Trail - Hope	EA B	2.2 km (18.8 ha/ 46 acres)	Crown Land Lease (10 yr renewed in 2010)	Regional Trail: Hiking	The Kettle Valley Rail Trail used to be part of the original Kettle Valley Railroad and is also a part of the Trans Canada Trail system. While some of it has been paved and turned into public road by the District of Hope, it is possible to walk from Thacker Regional Park to Coquihalla Canyon Provincial Park on the old railroad grade. The FVRD manages a 2.2 km stretch immediately west of Coquihalla Canyon Provincial Park.

3 Predicting Future Demand: Trends, challenges, and opportunities

A growing population combined with an escalating interest in outdoor recreation is increasing the demand for outdoor recreational opportunities in the area and that trend is likely to continue. As the population and park use climbs, pressures on the parks and recreation system will mount. There will be new challenges such as maintaining services at existing recreation sites, adjusting to demographic-led shifts in park use, and finding suitable, accessible areas to designate as new parkland. There will also be opportunities to take advantage of the region's natural assets in both a sustainable and economically advantageous way.

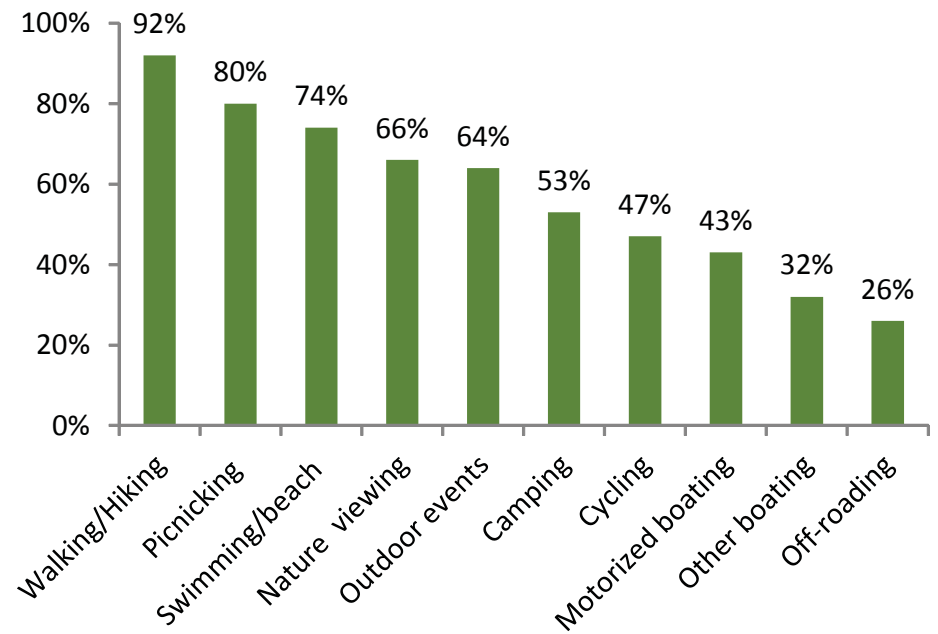


Dewdney Regional Park, EA G

3.1 Current and Future Use

The Outdoor Recreation Study found that Fraser Valley residents are among the most active in BC. The average resident makes 41 park visits annually (almost once a week). The most popular outdoor recreation activities tend to be relatively undemanding in terms of effort, skill, or special equipment. Walking/Hiking (92%) was listed as the most common outdoor activity, followed by picnicking (80%), beach and swimming activities (74%), and nature or wildlife viewing (66%) (see Figure 4). The FVRD parks surveys largely confirmed these findings, citing hiking/walking as the most common recreational activity followed by enjoying nature (63%) and nature or wildlife viewing (63%).

Figure 4. FVRD Resident Recreation Participation by Activity (ORS 2010)



Reinforcing this emphasis on nature, the 2013 Parks Survey conducted by the FVRD found that a majority of park visitors consider regional parks first and foremost as places to access and enjoy nature, and secondly as places to find peace and quiet. Recreational activities came in third, suggesting that people view regional parks as places where they can find respite from the hustle and bustle of their daily lives. This is also consistent with what FVRD survey park respondents felt should be the focus of regional parks over the next ten years (see Figure 6). An overwhelming majority of respondents (75%) indicated that protecting natural areas should be the highest priority. Acquiring new parkland was a close second. The third priority, expansion of trail networks (55%), was more consistent with the findings of the ORS. This is likely due to the strong recreational focus of the ORS (See Figure 5).

ORS findings indicate increasing demand for outdoor recreation opportunities. In the Lower Mainland, regional park visits are increasing

Figure 5. Regional Park Priorities as Identified by the public (FVRD 2013)

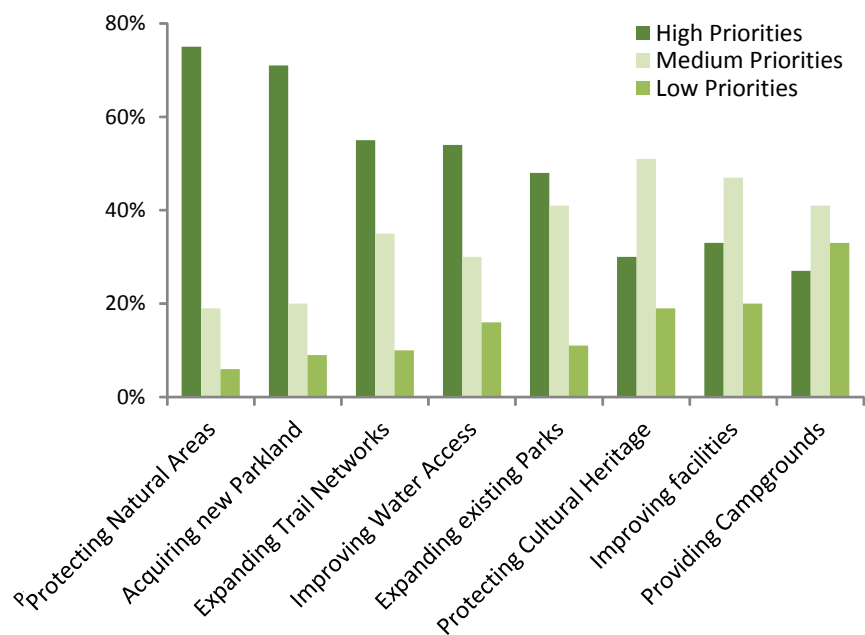
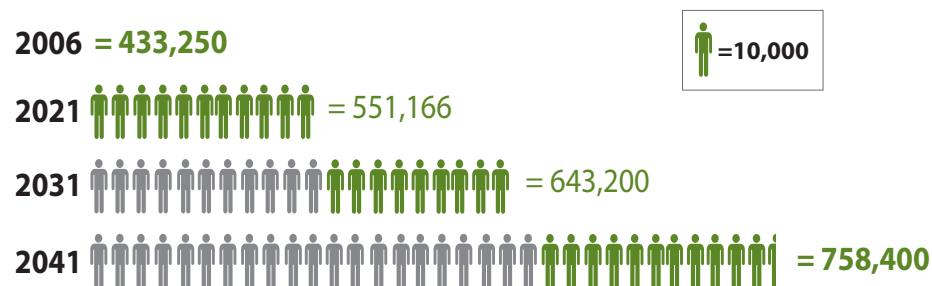


Figure 6. Projected Regional Park Visits 2006-2041



at a rate faster than population growth, suggesting that residents are using parks more today than in previous years. 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 each year by 2041 (see Figure 6). There are also outside influences to consider. From Metro Vancouver residents alone, FVRD parks currently receive an estimated 116,000 visits annually, a number that is expected to increase over time. 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 in order to relieve the growing strain on existing parkland.

To better understand the type of parkland that should be prioritized for future acquisition, RGS survey respondents were asked what kinds of places would best accommodate their recreation needs. The top responses were trails, wilderness areas, and recreation centres. The Outdoor Recreation Study identified wilderness and forest areas (20%) as the most preferred landscape for recreation.* Freshwater lakes or beachfront (19%), mountain areas (15%), and greenways or trails along dykes or rivers (7%) followed closely.

Participation in outdoor recreation is dynamic and continuously influenced by trends and demographic shifts. Participation in nature-based activities appears to be rising across North America, with more people spending

*Ocean and beachfront was most preferred at 23% but is not applicable to the FVRD

time viewing or photographing nature, visiting nature centres, and sightseeing. This is consistent with the 2013 survey results which indicated overwhelming support for hosting interpretive walks/hikes (73%) and school-based educational programs (66%) in regional parks.

A growing senior population is expected to increase the demand for low-impact recreational activities. There are indications that this may in fact be the general trend. The Outdoor Recreation Study found that the top ten preferred activities are more passive than active. To ensure that seniors, people with disabilities, and low-income residents are able to participate, accessibility is quickly becoming a standard for basic park planning. Ethnic shifts in the population are also expected to affect park usage, as minority populations have been found to utilize parks more for picnicking and organized sports than other populations.

To get an indication of future use, FVRD residents were asked what activities they planned to do more of in the coming year. Walking/hiking, cycling on dykes/flat trails, camping and fishing were at the top of the list. 2013 survey respondents indicated that they would be encouraged to use parks more if there were better connections to waterways (55%), to other parks and greenspaces (38%), and to nearby communities (38%). This suggests that park planning should consider not only what happens within park boundaries, but how each park fits into the region as a whole.

One of the cited barriers to participation in park visits was travel time and distance. The majority of survey respondents said they would be willing to travel no more than one to two hours for an outdoor day trip. Currently, the average travel time for FVRD residents is one hour and 17 minutes.

3.2 Regional Park Services and Amenities

ORS survey results show that the majority of the population is satisfied with the currently available services and facilities in regional parks and little or no concern was registered with respect to park security, safety, cleanliness and most core amenities. The FVRD park surveys largely corroborated these

findings. However, the research did reveal three issues that may warrant attention; identity, information availability, and infrastructure. These are described below:

Identity: FVRD and MV residents' awareness of regional parks is low. One in four residents surveyed could not name any regional parks, and many could not differentiate between regional parks and other parks and open spaces.

Information: The majority (64%) of FV residents surveyed were satisfied with regional parks' services and facilities, but there was much criticism regarding a lack of information both on-site and on-line surrounding the park locations, wayfinding within the parks (trail maps and markers), accessibility, and operating hours.

Infrastructure: Potential deficiencies in availability of washrooms were identified in the survey (71% of respondents noted the importance of washrooms in parks), but these may be indicative of the increasing pressures on the parks system from increasing use.



White Fawn Lily, Hillkeep Regional Park, Chilliwack

3.3 Gaps in the Regional Park System

The public consultation process revealed a number of gaps that would, if filled, improve the Regional Parks system.

Expansion of Existing Parks

With limited resources for acquisition, one way to meet growing demand may be to look at expanding recreational opportunities in existing regional parks classified as Recreation Areas that are currently under capacity. This type of expansion may also apply to Natural Areas where passive recreation has not been fully developed. However, further recreational development in natural areas should remain limited to passive recreation and be considered only to the extent that it does not negatively impact the natural and ecological features of the park. Additions to existing parkland would provide greater use than the purchase of a small stand-alone parcel could provide. It would also be cost effective in terms of operating costs as staff would already be committed to managing the area.



Cheam Lake Wetlands Regional Park, EA D

Stronger Trail Network

Expanding the network of trails for non-motorized passive recreation is a high priority. With the exception of Sumas Mountain and the three Regional Trails, the small size of regional parks limits the capacity to offer extensive trail networks. Any potential acquisition project that could support trails should be considered. This includes both wilderness trails and urban trails that support alternative and active modes of transportation. Priority should be given to trails that link up with neighbourhoods, communities, and other parklands and which are highly accessible by people of all ages and abilities.

Trail expansion is also one of the primary objectives of Experience the Fraser, a corridor project that aims to connect Hope with the Salish Sea through the Canyon to Coast Trail network along the Fraser River. Through ETF, the FVRD and Metro Vancouver are working to gain access to dykes along the Fraser for non-motorized recreational use. This would improve access to the Fraser River and provide an easy and accessible venue for walking, hiking, and cycling. Over the long term, this project has the potential to link the larger communities within the region. Any potential parkland acquisition along the Fraser River should be looked at through the lens of the larger ETF vision in terms of how it could contribute to the longer term goals.



Fraser River East Dyke, Chilliwack

Recreational Opportunities in and around Rivers and Lakes

Rivers and lakes define our region and continue to be a focal point for recreation. To keep up with demand and relieve growing pressure on existing parks, river and lake front will continue to be a high priority for parkland acquisition. Priorities include new access points and day use areas along the Fraser, Harrison, Chilliwack and Vedder Rivers, and Harrison, Stave, Cultus, and Chilliwack Lakes. There are also opportunities to access smaller lakes and rivers throughout the region. Recreational potential for water access and day use sites include picnicking, boating, fishing, swimming, and camping, all popular activities in the FVRD. This priority ties into the ETF Canyon to Coast Blueway initiative that seeks greater access to the Fraser River.



Cascade Falls Regional Park, EA F

Parks along the Fraser Canyon

There are currently no FVRD Regional Parks along the Fraser Canyon in Electoral Areas A & B. While populations are small, there is recreational demand in the area. Acquiring parkland would help meet local recreational demand and contribute to efforts to boost the local economy through recreation-based tourism. The ecology of the canyon is currently under-represented in the regional parks system. Protecting parkland along the upper Fraser River would protect Interior Douglas Fir, the biogeoclimatic zone native to the area, and provide an opportunity to educate residents on the biodiversity of the region. It would also begin to link the Experience the Fraser Canyon to Coast trail of the Lower Mainland to the Upper Fraser Canyon heritage corridor, Pathways to Gold, and highlight the rich history of the area.



Fraser Canyon, EA's A & B

4 Existing and Future Regional Park Priorities 2014-2024

4.1 The Vision

The Fraser Valley Regional Parks system will provide diverse opportunities for outdoor recreation, protect and steward areas of cultural and ecological significance, and promote a stronger connection between people and nature in a way that is responsive to and enhances the quality of life of the region's changing population.

4.2 Objectives of a Regional Parks and Trails System

To create a regional parks and trails network that:

- Offers a diversity of recreational opportunities and experiences
- Represents the diversity of landscapes and ecosystems in the region
- Protects and stewards areas of ecological and cultural significance
- Provides an opportunity for all residents to access, connect with, and enjoy nature
- Promotes active living
- Links communities and regions through an extensive trail/greenway system

- Boosts the economy by attracting tourists to the region
- Offers opportunities to learn about nature through educational and interpretive programs
- Is well managed and cost effective over the long term



Thacker Regional Park, Hope

4.3 Priorities for Existing Regional Parks

The highest planning priorities for existing regional parks include developing management plans for each individual park and securing longer-term lease agreements to ensure sound public investment. Priorities specific to each park over the next 10 years are identified in Table 4. The list of identified infrastructure improvements is included here to provide an example of immediate needs relating to each park. However the list is not exhaustive and will be added to as management plans for each park are created.

Table 4. Priorities for Existing Parks (2013-2023)

Park	Planning Priorities	Identified Infrastructure Improvements
Recreation Areas		
Cascade Falls	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Management Plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Construct suspension bridge and gatehouse • Enlarge picnic area • Replace park gates and upgrade parking
Island 22	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Management Plan • Pursue purchase and development of neighbouring property for park expansion (possible campsite) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Add garbage containers, change rooms, running water • Park entrance sign • Expand equestrian facilities
Neilson	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Management Plan • Facilities usage plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilities upgrades
Dewdney	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Secure long-term agreement with Dewdney Area Improvement District (DAID) • Management Plan • Consider name change for branding purposes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Install new washroom facilities and information kiosk • Increase launch capacity
Harrison Boat Launch	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Management Plan • Secure long-term lease agreement with Village of Harrison • Consider name change for branding purposes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TBD
Natural Areas		
Cheam Lake	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Management Plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Upgrade shelter/kiosk, washroom facilities • Resurface trail • Replace/add picnic tables
Hillkeep	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Management Plan • Secure long-term lease agreement with City of Chilliwack 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Upgrade road access, construct parking lot, and kiosk • Establish a Fraser River lookout • Interpretive centre
Sumas Mountain	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Management Plan in conjunction with Metro Vancouver 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trail upgrades and expansion
Thompson	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Management Plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Informational kiosk • Upgrade building facilities and pave parking lot
Thacker	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Management Plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Replace kiosk and foot bridges • Add viewing platform along marsh
Regional Trails		
Cheam Ridge Trail	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Management Plan • Secure a longer term management agreement with Province 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve Signage
Elk-Thurston Trail	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Management Plan • Secure a longer term management agreement with Province 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve Signage
Kettle Valley Regional Rail Trail	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Management Plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve Signage

4.4 Priorities for Future Parks

Acquiring new parkland will be necessary if the FVRD is to keep up with the growing demand for outdoor recreation in the region. However, the reality of limited funding will require a more creative approach to expanding the Regional Parks system. This approach may involve ownership and management partnerships with other jurisdictions, and will likely require innovative funding sources such as lease agreements, tax levies, grants, and/or community legacy programs. This is not new for the FVRD. In fact, the majority of Regional Parkland is currently leased or managed by the FVRD from a third party.

Securing long term land tenure agreements is another priority for both existing and future parkland. Several FVRD Regional Parks are currently held under short-term lease agreements (less than five years). Short term arrangements create on-going uncertainty as to the future of those parks. If the FVRD is to continue to provide capital for park improvements, it is fiscally responsible to ensure that there will be a full return, in terms of public benefit, on any investments made over the long term. To ensure that this is the case, the FVRD is committed to securing longer term land tenure agreements on existing and future parklands.

In light of budgetary restraints it is also worth emphasizing the need to carefully weigh long-term management and operations costs along with acquisition costs as they will vary dramatically depending on the landscape, park classification and proposed use.

4.5 Acquisition Criteria

Parkland acquisition can be a long and expensive process and opportunities for acquisition are infrequent and arise when least expected. To prepare for these instances, a set of criteria has been developed against which a potential property may be assessed. The criterion is divided into four categories (regional significance, recreational, ecological, and management) to assess the property's potential to contribute to the long term objectives of the Regional Park system. It is intended to highlight the opportunities, challenges, and any inherent tradeoffs of a potential acquisition in the most objective way possible. While it will not necessarily provide a definitive answer, this tool will help to identify priorities and assess whether time and money spent on an acquisition project will be appropriate, cost effective and worthwhile over the long term.

Regional Significance

- Is it easily accessible to all residents?
- Does it fill a geographic gap or serve an underserved population?
- Is there public interest? (Does it formalize an already popular recreation destination?)
- Does it offer one or more unique experiences:
 - Natural feature or landscape,
 - Viewing opportunity (vista or wildlife),
 - Recreational opportunities,
 - Historic,
 - Cultural heritage.
- Would it contribute to healthy living by offering opportunities for active transportation (walking, biking, etc)?

Recreational Opportunities

- Would it complement existing regional park uses by offering one or more of the following:
 - A new recreational opportunity,
 - Multiple forms of recreation,
 - Expansion or linkages to an existing park,
 - Alleviation of overuse at existing parks.
- Would it help to meet identified recreation demand?
- Does it offer lake or river access, trails, or camping?
- Does it respond to changing needs/demographics?
- Could it be used year-round? (weigh benefit of greater use with increased operational costs)

Ecosystem Protection

- Would park development be compatible with the preservation of significant features, habitats, and species?
- Does it protect sensitive ecological areas or unique species representative of the region or, which are currently underrepresented in the parks system?
- Is it likely that there will be other opportunities to protect similar ecosystems?
- Does it provide an opportunity for people to connect with nature?
- Is there an opportunity for education/interpretation signs/programs?
- Does it enhance open space and greenway connections through the region?

Project Feasibility & Management

- Is the project affordable and cost effective? (consider acquisition, development, and operational costs)
- Is there funding available? (acquisition fund, donations, grants, cost-splitting opportunities)
- Is another jurisdiction better suited to take on the project?
- Are there opportunities to partner with other entities on acquisition and/or management of the proposed park?
- Are there any land use constraints associated with the property? (ALR, RAR, zoning, hazards, etc)
- Are neighbouring properties and land uses compatible with park use?
- Are there any anticipated user conflicts?
- Will clean up, restoration, or mitigation be required prior to use or is it ready for use?
- What are the management implications?
 - Public Safety & Liability (geotechnical hazards)
 - Infrastructure (construction and maintenance)
 - Access (for both park users, and staff, is it far from the head office? Would staffing need to be contracted out?)
 - Cost (maintenance, staffing, liability)
- Will there be similar opportunities in the future?

5 Implementation

It will take many years to develop the Regional Parks system into the vision. Success will largely depend on responding strategically to opportunities that arise and creating a system that is flexible enough to respond to changing demands and demographics. Even with this uncertainty, there are several actions that can be taken over the next ten years that will contribute to the overall vision for Regional Parks.

5.1 Action Steps

■ **Actively pursue parkland acquisitions.** The FVRD will use the acquisition criteria to evaluate potential new parklands and actively pursue those that align with the criteria and long term objectives of the regional park system.

■ **Strengthen partnerships.** The FVRD will continue to improve and develop partnerships with adjacent property owners, Municipalities, Electoral Areas, neighbouring regional districts, the Province, academic Institutions, improvement districts, conservation groups, industry, volunteer groups and others to more effectively manage existing parks.

■ **Explore opportunities to partner with First Nations.** The FVRD will make an effort to work with First Nations on projects in which there is a common interest. More specifically, the FVRD will work in partnership with Metro Vancouver and Sumas First Nation to clarify their roles and establish a solid working relationship to develop Sumas Mountain Interregional Park.

■ **Develop park specific management and operations plans.** A priority over the next few years is to develop management plans that are specific to each park. Doing so will help to define the parks role within the larger park system, provide a clearer understanding of future opportunities and challenges and set short and long term goals. Management plans should adhere to the common objectives outlined in this plan. In addition, Section

Contents of a Management Plan

- Site Context (Land Use, surrounding areas) and Park Map
- Legal Context (i.e. ownership, partnership agreements, stakeholders)
- Planning process/ public input
- Park Classification (as defined by this plan)
- Site Inventory and Analysis including:
 - Ecology
 - Historical Value
 - Cultural Value
 - Recreational amenities
- Identified Opportunities and Constraints
- Vision and Guidelines
- Short Term and Long Term Priorities (specific actions)
- Implementation (cost, priorities, monitoring)
- Funding Strategy

6 of this plan creates a foundation on which management plans should be based. All management plans should contain, at a minimum, the information outlined above.

■ **Secure long-term land use agreements.** While some land use agreements are well-established, others are short-term in nature and ill-defined. This uncertainty as to the future of the parkland severely limits the FVRD's ability and incentive to effectively plan and provide for the future needs of the park in a cost-effective manner. The FVRD will work to establish more secure long-term partnerships with clearly defined roles. For new and existing regional parkland held under lease, the FVRD will aim to secure 20 year lease agreements at a minimum.

■ **Review existing land assets.** Evaluate park reserve lands for their potential value as parkland and determine how they might best serve the Regional Parks system in the future.

■ **Annually update and promote use of GATOR mapping.** GATOR (Gap Analysis Tool for Outdoor Recreation) is a map-based tool with an associated database. The program can be used to maintain an updated inventory of all parks and park amenities in the Region. An inventory will be conducted on an annual basis to keep information current.

■ **Promote parks to residents and visitors.** To increase awareness of Regional Parks, and create a more user-friendly service, the FVRD will make a concerted effort to improve access to information both on-site and online regarding park use, locations, hours, amenities, etc. To send a consistent message, any informational or promotional materials should closely align with FVRD Park Sign Standards.

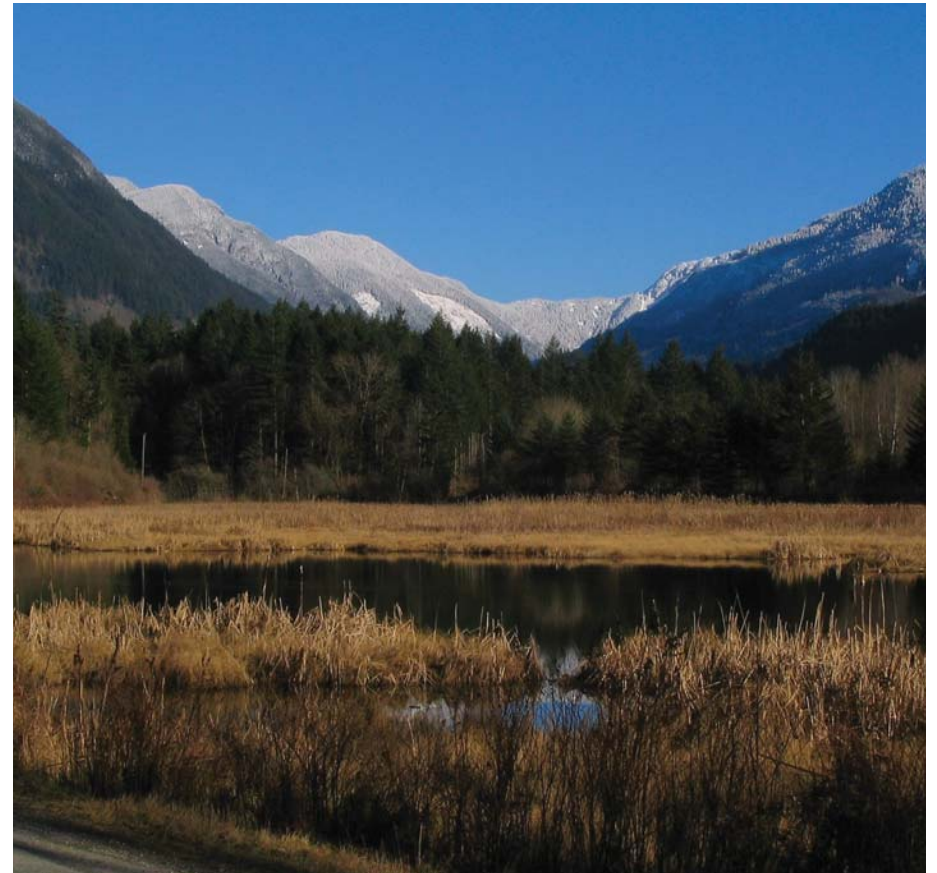
■ **Standardize park signs and structures for branding purposes.** Over the next ten years the FVRD will replace all park signs. Park structures will also be standardized and replaced as the need arises and funding becomes available. This will improve the experience for park users by relaying information in a more consistent and user-friendly manner and will form the basis of a more recognizable Regional Parks brand.

■ **Support the Experience the Fraser initiative.** Work with ETF to improve recreational opportunities in and along the Fraser River. In particular, work with ETF to secure access to dykes along the river and support efforts that offer a chance to collaborate with First Nations on park and recreation-based initiatives.

■ **Measure and track park use.** Consistent use of a tracking program such as TrafX will help to monitor demand and inform future park plans. In addition, periodically conduct user surveys to gauge user experiences and satisfaction.

■ **Establish ecological stewardship programs.** Work with community groups and volunteers to develop and implement stewardship programs where needed to protect and maintain native ecology. This could include invasive plant monitoring and control programs, tree plantings, and other forms of habitat restoration.

■ **Review the Parks Regulation Bylaw.** To ensure it is up-to-date, the Parks Regulation Bylaw 0976, 2010 should be reviewed at least once every five years and updated as necessary.



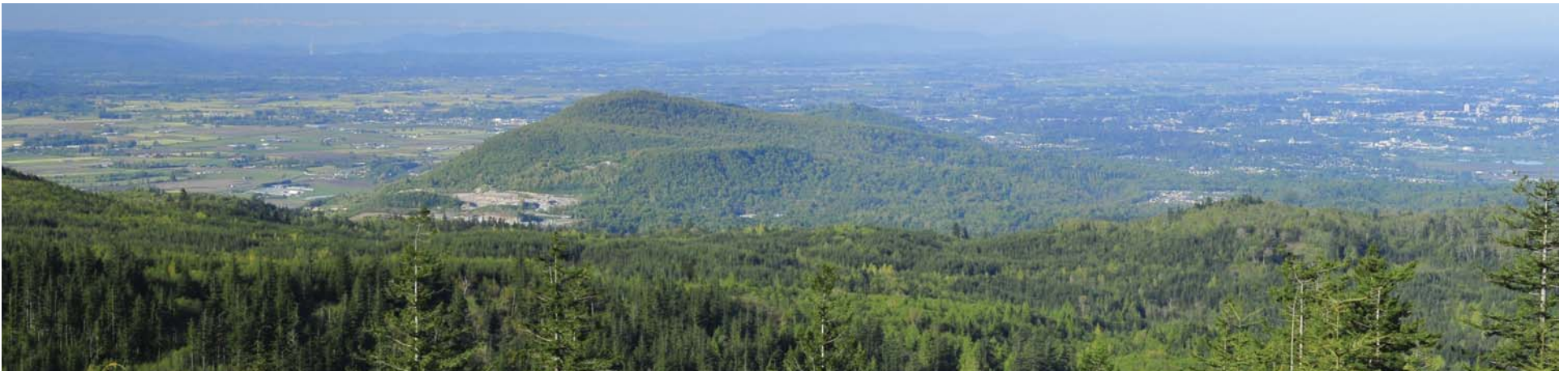
Thacker Regional Park, Hope

5.2 Funding Strategies

Currently the parks function is funded primarily through a levy to taxpayers. As new parks are acquired and management costs increase, it will be necessary to consider new funding sources. Over the next ten years, the parks department will explore the following opportunities for new revenue generation:

- **Evaluate the existing park user fee structure.** Ensure that any existing or future park user fees (i.e. user permit fees, boat launch fees, events fees) are cost-effective and add value to the park without deterring residents and visitors from using FVRD Regional Parks.
- **Establish a parks acquisition fund.** Similar to the current parks levy, this tax would be based on property assessment. Funds collected would go into a dedicated parks acquisition fund.
- **Pursue grant funding.** Continue to apply for grant opportunities for the purchase or improvement of parklands.

- **Jointly fund acquisition or park improvements through partnerships.** Explore possibilities for acquiring land jointly with other interested parties (i.e. municipalities, conservation groups, etc).
- **Establish a planned giving program.** Encourage monetary and land donations through the establishment of a planned giving or legacy program.
- **Develop volunteer stewardship programs.** Residents often develop a vested interest in the upkeep and well-being of nearby parks. Encourage the creation of community volunteer programs and in-kind contributions that will help lower maintenance costs.
- **Establish a commemorative gifts program.** Establish a commemorative gifts program that offers residents an opportunity to commemorate a special occasion or loved one by donating benches, trees or other capital improvement projects. A commemorative plaque would acknowledge donations (i.e. park bench dedication).
- **Consider Development Cost Charges.** Establish a DCC that is allocated to parkland as permitted under Section 936 of the Local Government Act.



Sumas Mountain Interregional Park, EA G & Abbotsford

6 Management Guidelines

Management plans are tailored to address the specific needs of each Regional Park. However, there are some management guidelines that span all parks. This section focuses on some of the more universal management principles. These policies are intended to ensure all parks are managed to an acceptable and consistent standard with regards to safety, facility design & standards, environmental protection and park use. The policies below should be incorporated into the development of all subsequent management plans.

■ **Public safety standards.** There is inherent risk associated with outdoor recreation. The FVRD will work to ensure public safety by minimizing risk associated with personal injury and natural hazards (i.e. landslides, wildfires, floods, etc.). All projects should follow guidelines provided by the Municipal Insurance Association (MIA) or the Canadian Standards Association (CSA) on risk management.

■ **Environmental protection.** Regardless of classification, parks must be managed in a way that does not negatively impact ecosystem health. Design of both passive and intensive recreational activities should be sensitive to the surrounding ecology.

■ **Sign standards and park branding.** Park signs are one of the most important ways to communicate with visitors. When well-presented, signs effectively inform, direct, instruct, and warn visitors about all aspects of a park. Consistent signage is also critical to ensuring a successful FVRD Regional Parks branding strategy. A FVRD Parks Sign Standards Manual is being created to provide guidelines for the creation, placement and installation of new Regional Park signs. As a companion to this guide, digital templates have been created to streamline the sign production and replacement process. The manual should be consulted for the creation and replacement of all park signs.

■ **Facility design.** To the greatest extent possible, all new facilities and signs should adhere to the guidelines established in the FVRD Design Standards Manual.

■ **Land use.** Park classification dictates how park land is used and managed. Each classification comes with different priorities. Below are a few guidelines specific to each park type that should be considered as the management plan is developed:

Natural Areas:

- Minimize alteration of natural landscapes and ecological processes
- Outline procedures to control access to ecologically sensitive areas, particularly during critical periods of the year (e.g., nesting periods)
- Designate appropriate activity and non-activity areas
- Avoid activities that could negatively affect water quality
- Consider opportunities to observe and/or study natural phenomena and processes
- Establish a plan to control invasive species
- Identify potential habitat restoration opportunities

Recreation Areas

- Prioritize public safety
- Undertake careful planning to prevent user conflicts between recreational activities
- Where applicable, establish an event policy

Regional Trails

- Undertake careful planning to prevent user conflicts
- Ensure trails are of suitable width for specified uses
- Consider accessibility where feasible
- Minimize alteration of natural landscapes and ecological processes

■ **Accessibility.** As new facilities, signs, trails, and other amenities are constructed and installed, care should be given to adhere to current accessibility standards, where feasible. Older amenities should be retrofitted or updated to meet guidelines to ensure that all ages and abilities can enjoy parks. The US Access Board (www.access-board.gov/outdoor) and Access Recreation (www.accessrecreation.org) have both developed guidelines for creating accessible outdoor environments and should be used as a resource.

■ **Establish relationships with neighbours and the surrounding community.** The FVRD should make every effort to engage adjacent property owners and nearby communities in park development and stewardship. Community members with a vested interest in the park are more likely to act as park stewards. Community park stewards, either through a formal group or more informally, can benefit the Regional Parks system in two ways: by contributing time and energy to ensuring park health, and by having 'eyes on the ground' which can help to prevent vandalism and other offences from occurring. Established community relationships can also reduce the number of potential land use conflicts and help to resolve any issues that may arise more quickly.

■ **Support impacted communities.** Smaller communities immediately adjacent to popular recreation areas are finding it increasingly difficult to cope with the traffic, parking demands, noise and other associated burdens of parkland. In cases where the region as a whole benefits from established parkland, management of these issues should not be placed solely on the community but should be a responsibility shared between the community and the Regional Parks Department. This should be reflected in the regional parks budget. Where the parkland is Provincial or Crown land, the regional district will work closely with the province to address these concerns.

■ **Regulation.** The FVRD Parks Regulation Bylaw 0976, 2010, outlines additional policy guidelines on general conduct, pets, fire, motor vehicle use, commercial activity, preservation of wildlife and user fees.

7 Conclusion

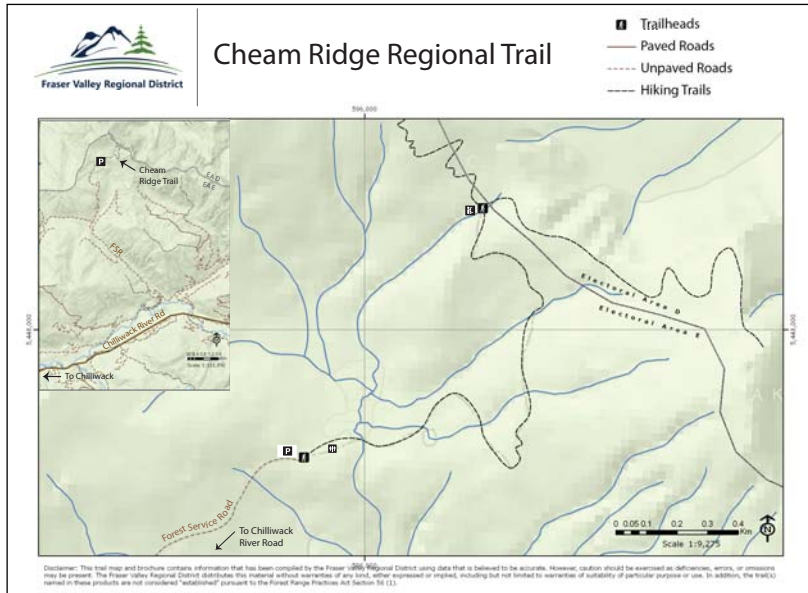
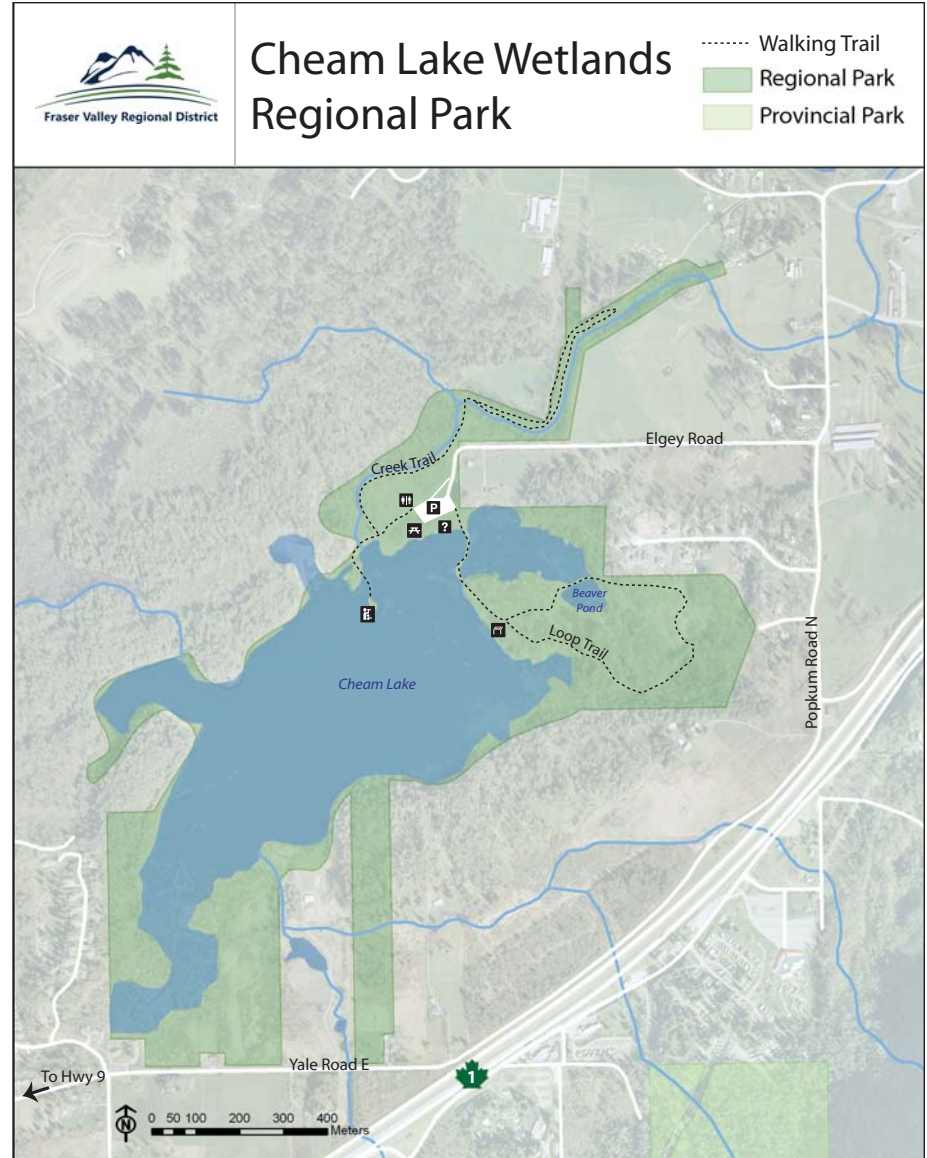
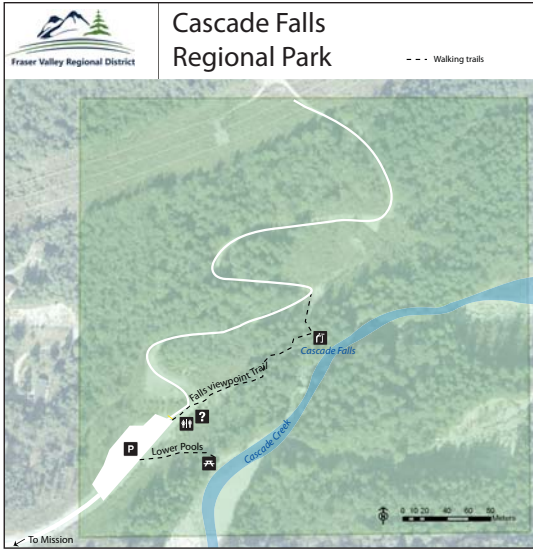
This Regional Parks Strategic plan offers clear direction for Regional Park development and improvement over the next decade. The plan identifies priorities over the long term and offers action steps that can be implemented in the shorter term to ensure that consistent progress is made towards achieving the overall Regional Parks vision. To be able to respond to any challenges or opportunities that may arise in the future, the plan maintains a level of flexibility - a critical characteristic in a region where a growing population, demographic changes and trends in park use are the only certainty.

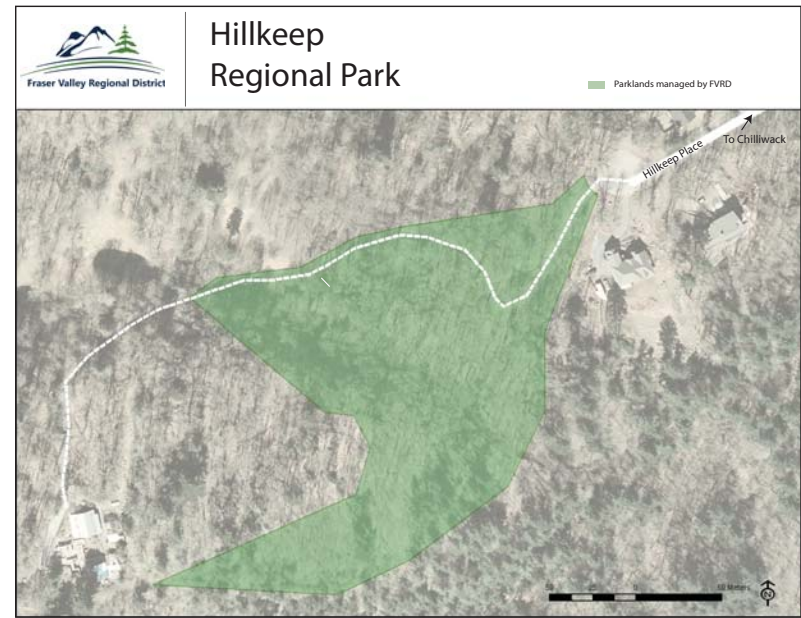
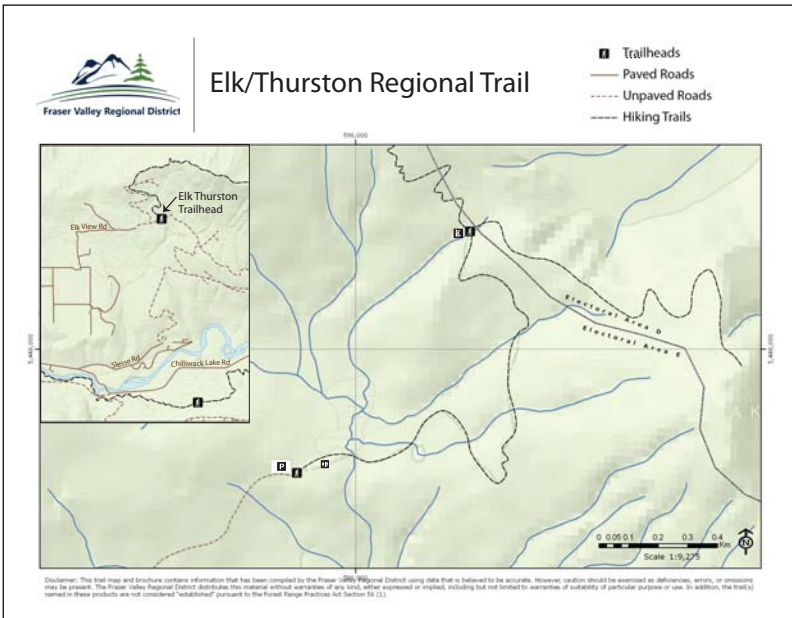
With this plan, we can ensure that important natural areas are protected, and that everyone, no matter age, ethnicity, or physical ability, has access to nature and recreational opportunities in the Fraser Valley Regional District today and in the future.

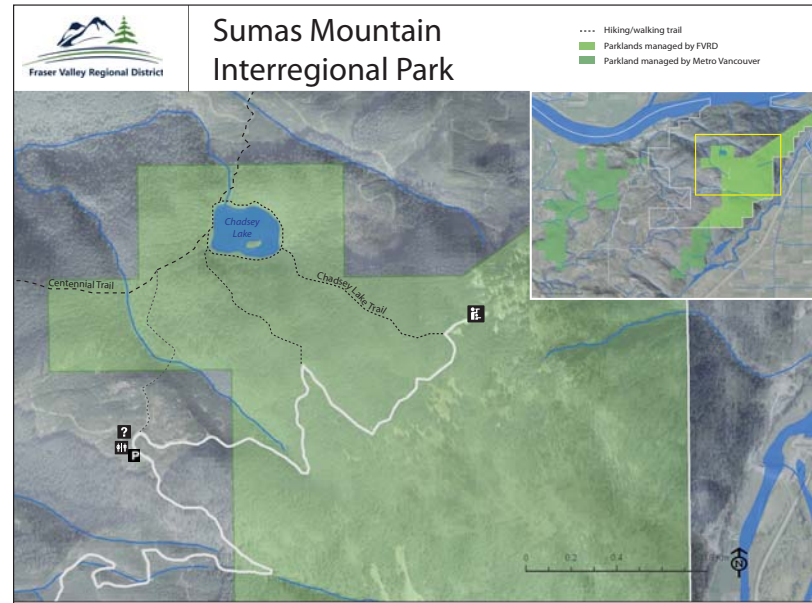


Cheam Lake Wetlands Regional Park, EA D

Appendix A - Regional Park Maps









Thacker Regional Park

- Trail - walking/cycling
- Thacker Regional Park
- Nature Preserve



Thompson Regional Park

- Hiking/walking trail
- Parklands managed by FVRD
- Crown Land (Chilliwack River Valley Recreation Area)



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