



PARKS, RECREATION  
& COMMUNITY SERVICES

**REPORT TO:** Parks, Trails & Recreation Committee, Environmental and Natural Areas, and Healthy Saanich Committees

**DATE:** June 22, 2022

**FROM:** Eva Riccius, Senior Manager, Parks

**SUBJECT: Parks Division Update – June, 2022**

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The following update is provided for Committees:

### **Community Development and Business Systems**

#### **Park user groups:**

Parks spaces are in high demand with spring / summer sports and historical uses rebounding from the COVID-19 pandemic Staff are busy fielding requests for new and updated permits from sports groups, school and private events and activities.

Parks staff continue to be busy adjudicating park partner project applications from home user groups to help improve park infrastructure. This includes many groups repainting infrastructure in the new parks colour palette which is popular among the groups and community (kudos to Park Planning and Design team for palette selection). Notable infrastructure painted is the ball infrastructure at Allenby Park which is complete. Painting activities are in progress at Layritz Park (diamond 2) and Lambrick Park (diamond 2).

More major capital projects (dollars) in Parks are underway with community groups that are worth noting:

- **2022:** Hampton Park Field lights upgrade to LED technology (with Gorge Soccer Association), Layritz Park artificial turf replacement (with Prospect Lake Soccer Club).
- **2023:** Braefoot Park artificial turf replacement with Lakehill Soccer Association.

Overall relationships are positive with groups. In addition to home user groups and historical users, the Parks team has been able to find space to get new users access to space in our Parks through a permit. Examples of new groups includes cricket, ultimate frisbee, flag football and some community events to name a few.

Parks staff have worked extensively with Legal Services to develop templates for more agreements with community groups / home user groups who use park spaces for their activities. Parks has renewed agreements with two of the three community gardens so far this year. Parks will continue this initiative through the rest of the year and work towards all home users having a modern agreement.

#### **Park Stewardship Update:**

##### ***Pulling Together Volunteer Orientations***

We are providing a series of volunteer orientations for new restoration volunteers, and those

who have never been officially oriented to the program. It is a requirement of the program that volunteers receive a general orientation about Saanich Parks and the Pulling Together program. Our first session was well attended with 25 volunteers, and volunteers were provided a link to the updated volunteer handbook that can be viewed in the Better Impact volunteer management system.



Updated Volunteer handbook



Knockan Hill Work Party

### ***Pulling Together Work Parties***

Pulling Together volunteers continue to gather every day of the week in different parks. For those groups looking for more volunteers, the work party dates/ times will be posted on the [Saanich Events Calendar](#), social media and/or posters in the park. The weeds do not stop, so new volunteers are always welcome to join as drop in volunteers, and for those who want to commit to a year, they can register as official restoration volunteers.

### ***Outreach and Education***

Volunteers provide valuable outreach and education to the community, Park Ambassadors in Mount Douglas Park, and Pulling Together volunteers in many parks. When able, Park volunteers also staff outreach tables at community events like at the recent Voices in Nature event, where they provided information about volunteer opportunities at Outerbridge Park.

### ***Invasive Species Action Month***

There was increased interest from teachers during May to learn about and participate in invasive species removal with their students. We have supported 15 classes over the past month either with staff or volunteers facilitated meaningful experiences with youth. Just to share a comment from a Braefoot School Teacher:

*“On behalf of our class I just wanted to say thanks again to all of you for that wonderfully fantastic afternoon!! The kids had such a blast and they learned a lot. Many of them were saying they wanted to stay in the park pulling the weeds for the entire afternoon. Thank you! They thoroughly enjoyed that. Much appreciated :-)”*

### ***UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration/Make a Difference Week***

As part of the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration, and ‘Make a Difference Week’ we hosted a Pulling Together volunteer event on June 11<sup>th</sup> in Haro Woods. [Find Restoration Events - Make a Difference Week](#). The usual Pulling Together community stewardship groups met in different parks every day of the week to work on their ongoing habitat restoration projects.



*Braefoot Students at Feltham*



*Browning Park first work party*

### ***Browning Park and Doris Page Park Pulling Together projects***

We have recently initiated two new Pulling Together community stewardship projects in parks, with a total of 46 active projects. The Browning Park group had their first work party on May 15<sup>th</sup> and are looking forward to hosting more throughout the summer. Natural Areas staff have installed a split rail fence to protect the planned restoration of this riparian area adjacent to Bowker Creek. The Doris Page Park group is still in the planning phase of the project and will announce a work party in the early fall.

## **Park Planning and Development**

### **Construction Section:**

- Gyro Park – beach mats were installed June 1<sup>st</sup>.
- Quicks Bottom Park – water control and preliminary landscape improvements complete in new arboretum area (ready for fall tree planting).
- Tripp Bike Station – concrete furniture pads poured and furniture in place, with remaining work to be completed by contractor; expected completion before the end of June.
- Hampton Park – asphalt pathway (running behind soccer fields to Seaton Rd.) complete.
- Meadow Park - washroom water leak repaired.
- Gorge Park – parking lot near community gardens received new gates, fresh pavement and is now open.
- Layritz Park – temporary disc golf facility minor repair work completed.
- Furniture refinishing and new installs in ongoing throughout the parks system.
- Braefoot Park - building deck is repaired and the building is in process of being painted (inside).
- Pop-up Dog Parks - setup at Beckwith, Gorge Park, and Vantreight Park complete, with rotation to new parks scheduled for July and August.
- Graffiti clean up work ongoing.
- Playground inspections and maintenance ongoing.
- Mt. Tolmie Park - sidewalk cracks repaired at summit parking lot.
- Various trail repairs and maintenance ongoing.

## **Planning and Design Section:**

### ***Emergency Planning – Park Misting Stations***

Park Planning and Design recommends a three-part strategy to addressing water access during extreme heat events. First, water supply will be added to each park that houses a Saanich Neighbourhood Playground Program for the summer of 2022. Each site will be provided with a hose and mister (complete). Second, a pilot misting station installation will be initiated with the objective of completing installation in 2022. Candidate sites and products are being considered. Third, Engineering will be engaged to explore opportunities for placing roadside misting stations in urban areas, where deemed appropriate.

### ***Fowler Park***

Fowler Park concept design work is ongoing. An engineering consultant has been retained to conduct acoustic testing and provide advice on sound mitigation options for a possible pickleball facility at Fowler Park. Results from the acoustic testing will be shared with the Pickleball Association of BC for use in their study on the same issue.

### ***Cecelia Creek Falls Park***

A revised concept plan has been developed that is consistent with the 2009 'daylighting' concept, but reduces construction cost significantly and provides enhanced community benefit. The revised concept achieves this by reducing excavation volume, reducing tree removal requirements, and adding water treatment function to the design. The revised concept will be presented to council on July 4<sup>th</sup>, and if approved, detailed design will proceed through the fall with construction proposed for 2023.

### ***Food Trucks in Parks Pilot Program***

Up to two food trucks will be located at Beckwith and Cadboro-Gyro Parks from July 1 – September 9. Vendors are responsible for posting and updating their schedules on the Victoria Food Trucks website independent of the Parks Division; a link to this schedule is provided on Parks' Food Trucks webpage.

### ***Public Park Washrooms***

Pre-fabricated fully-serviced washrooms for McMinn and Playfair Parks are anticipated to arrive before August, though final delivery date is yet to be confirmed. Sites will need to be prepared.

### ***People Pets and Parks Strategy***

Round #1 of public engagement is coming to a close. Virtual Community Conversations were held on both June 2 & 14 and the online survey ends on June 19. A statistically valid survey is in progress. Information collected will help inform Round #2 of public engagement which will start in the summer and run into the fall.

Lees and Associates will be presenting an update at the June PTR meeting.

## **Park Operations**

### **Maintenance Section:**

- We have completed our rehabilitation of our multiuse sportsfields after the winter of soccer play. All fields are now available to the citizens of Saanich for use.
- A Cricket Pitch will be setup at Beckwith Park by mid-June.
- Ball season is in full swing and we are out servicing our 32 ballfields (weekly).
- Tennis and Pickleball are busy and we are servicing our 36 courts (weekly).
- Lacrosse is in season and we are servicing our 2 Lacrosse boxes (weekly).

- Refuse is busy and we are out 7 days a week (12 hours per day Monday, Thursday & Friday) to keep up.
- We are servicing our 15 washroom locations 7 days week.
- Gravel parking lot dust abatement will happen this month for our 16 locations. An environmental product is used for this.
- Rough mowing of Parks and Trail areas has begun (2 month program twice a year).
- Homelessness issues are increasing and we are responding with support from Saanich Police.

#### **Horticulture Section:**

- We are still in the ongoing process of hiring and training new staff to fulfil section obligations. In the past 2 months we've integrated 7 new staff into passive turf cutting roles, joining our 3 returning staff members in that role.
- Our annual flower order has arrived and our 6 Horticulturists are busy planting our 20+ beautiful display beds.
- Cul de Sac and median garden maintenance is ongoing on our nearly 500 streetscape gardens.
- Our beautiful hanging baskets have arrived and are quickly going up at recreation centres and municipal hall.

#### **Urban Forestry and Natural Areas**

##### **Urban Forestry Section:**

- With tree planting wrapped up we have switched staff over to tree watering. We are currently running 2.5 watering trucks to water 980 trees in boulevards and green spaces, and another 920 trees are being maintained and monitored on Irrigation in our Parks.
- We are still working on our small tree maintenance list. This work includes weeding, mulching, and fertilizing the trees as required and removing stakes where it is suitable to do so. There is some pruning of dead/broken branches. This list currently has 820 trees on it.
- The May 18<sup>th</sup> wind storm caused widespread damage throughout Saanich. Over a 48hr period the Urban Forestry section received 120 calls in regards to downed trees, and broken limbs.
- We've done a good job of triaging calls for service to take care of any immediate public tree hazards right away. The crews are still working on the remaining cleanup from that storm.
- The Supervisory team continues to be busy with looking at Calls for Service, Engineering design review, and providing Arborist Supervision services to Public Works projects.
- We have started our nursery visits to purchase trees for our fall park planting program.

##### **Natural Areas Section:**

- Staff continue to support the Pulling Together volunteer program with daily pile pick-ups, mulch and chip drop off and work party events, including school groups.
- Crews are just wrapping up the Shiny Geranium invasive program in park and boulevard sites. This was a full-time program for 2-3 people over the past couple of months. Last November, the Province announced that it would no longer financially support the Shiny Geranium program. We did not manage the private sites in 2022.
- A crew of two staff are full-time on the Poison Hemlock program; the plants are close to two months ahead on establishing seeds this year.
- Garlic Mustard and Knotweed are also being managed in the spring; our Environmental Technician (from Environmental Services section) is just starting the early field work on the private Knotweed program.
- Two crews are full-time on the trail vegetation program and we are getting several requests for service each day for over-grown trails and sidewalks. We wait until nesting

season is somewhat winding down and for some of the native flowers (Camas) to set seed before we go strong on the pruning/cutting of vegetation. The beach access points were cleared several weeks ago.

- One staff is full-time on our restoration watering program; this will run into September. The other 0.5 from the third Urban Forestry watering truck is dedicated to our program as well. This fourth truck runs evenings and weekends.
- Our second Natural Areas Practitioner spends much of her time on the MoTI funded Garry Oak and Trembling Aspen projects. The Layritz Park Garry Oak site has had a lot of invasives removed and a post and rope fence installed to help keep people and pets from disturbing the area.
- The new post and rope fencing that was installed on Little Mount Douglas has seen amazing results with little to no foot traffic as a result. Several signs were installed along the fencing and people and pets seem to be respecting them.
- Other protective fencing sites (Knockan Hill, Mount Tolmie, Mt Douglas Summit, Hyacinth Park, and Fairburn Park) are also seeing excellent rebounding of native plant species with no traffic.
- Plans are coming together for phase 2 of the Cuthbert Holmes Park/Colquitz Creek Pathway and Trembling Aspen projects; most of the work will be on the west side of the creek this year removing the old black-top pathway, building three more fish habitat alcoves, building a viewing area, and planting the riparian zone. The big habitat alcove that was constructed and planted last year's looks incredible with many animal species utilizing the new space (including two nesting pairs of Killdeer).
- Working with Peninsula Streams and the Creeks & Waterways crew from Public Works, we will be restoring another 100m plus section of the Colquitz River at the Copley East bridge site; this will connect to the 210m sections that were restored in 2018 and 2019.
- The nesting pair of Great Horned Owls in Cuthbert Holmes Park (that inhabited the nesting platform built and installed in 2021) have produced three more Owlets that are thriving in the park.
- A section of Cedar split-rail fencing was installed from the Dysart Bridge to the point in Cuthbert Holmes Park to help deter people and pets from disturbing the water edges and creatures that inhabit it.
- We are working closely with the Park Stewardship Coordinator to help establish/expand the Pulling Together program with new groups starting up (see photo above from Browning Park with new split-rail fence installed), developing best management practices, and writing park restoration plans.
- We are committed to the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration with our Garry Oak Dripline project but restoration plans with staff are stalled until we can secure funding for this ten year project. Pulling Together volunteers are continuing their great work at a few of the sites including Braefoot and Knockan Hill Parks.
- We've spent much more time this year surveying various Species at Risk (SAR) including the Bearded Owl Clover in Glencoe Cove Park and two other spots in the Ten Mile area. We also inventoried and built protective fencing for a Purple Sannicle plant in Mount Douglas.