

# Haro Woods Park

## Management Plan

Parks and Recreation Department  
Parks Division | Approved by  
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THIS DOCUMENT IS FORMATTED FOR DOUBLE-SIDED PRINTING

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Saanich Parks would like to thank the members of the Haro Woods Advisory Group for their thoughtful comments and patient perseverance in developing this plan.

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We would also like to thank Valerie Elliott (contractor - iD2 Communications Inc.), for her good work overseeing the public participation component of this project.

# 1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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Haro Woods is in traditional Coast and Straits Salish First Nations territory. Before European contact the coastline of the general Cadboro/Cordova Bay area was highly active, and much of the area around Haro Woods is considered to have a high likelihood of past activity. This plan acknowledges and respects First Nations' history and heritage.

In more recent history, Haro Woods was perceived and used as a community greenspace long before it was actually designated as one. It was, and still is highly valued for its availability to the general public, its peace and quiet, and the opportunity for young and old to experience nature.

Saanich owns almost 3/4 of the woods, and it was officially designated as parkland in 2013. The process that led to this designation also triggered the development of this Management Plan. The balance of the woods is owned by the Capital Regional District (CRD) and the University of Victoria (UVic). This plan refers to the entire area owned by Saanich, the CRD and UVic as 'Haro Woods' and the Saanich-owned portions as 'Haro Woods Park'. The Vision, Goals and Actions section applies to Haro Woods Park only.

This plan relied on public participation to identify community values, and to create the Vision statement and Goals that are the framework for the plan's implementation. The Haro Woods Advisory Group played a key role in ensuring that the public was effectively engaged and represented in the plan, and in finalizing the Vision and Goals. Public input from the 2010–2013 wastewater treatment site-related subdivision and rezoning process was included, as well as from 4 public participation events in 2016 – 2018.

This plan strives to accommodate visitors of all ages, and resolve long term issues in Haro Woods Park, primarily; conflicting uses, invasive plants, and impacts to soil and vegetation that unmanaged off-trail biking and jump-building has caused. Throughout the public engagement process, some residents supported limited and contained off-trail biking and jump-building and different scenarios were presented and explored at the last two public events. However, support was insufficient to justify recommending rezoning the park to allow these activities. The management plan recommends no changes to the park's current P4-N (Natural Park) zoning. This zoning allows for passive, not active, recreational uses.



Key issues addressed by the plan are:

- Lack of an established recreation program and supporting infrastructure
- Unapproved trail and bike jump-building
- Damage to native vegetation and soils
- Degradation of Finnerty Creek
- Invasive plants
- Lack of communication with park visitors

The Vision for Haro Woods Park is:

***‘Haro Woods is a healthy urban forest. It is a functioning ecosystem that welcomes respectful use.’***

The Goals that will realize this Vision are supported by Saanich policy, and are grouped into general themes; Recreation, Protection, and Access/Connection. Each Goal has a number of Actions that are necessary to achieve it.

With Council, community, volunteer and staff support, the plan’s Goals and Actions can establish a respectful model of use in Haro Woods Park, and ensure that the community will continue to benefit from its physical, psychological and social benefits.



## 2. INTRODUCTION

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### 2.1 Overview

Haro Woods is a wooded area (totalling 8.8 ha / 21.7 acres) in the Cadboro Bay Local Area. It is valued for its natural environment, and both passive and active recreation. It is made up of 4 parcels of land with 3 different owners: the District of Saanich, the Capital Regional District (CRD), and the University of Victoria (UVic).

Purchased over the last 50 plus years, most of the parcels were not originally intended to serve as parkland, nevertheless the community embraced them as such, and the Saanich parcels' zoning has evolved to reflect this.

Since Saanich acquired its first parcel in 1961, the ownership, division, and intended use of the parcels has been revised twice. These revisions involved Provincial, Regional and Municipal input and approvals, and a great deal of public consultation. The public has consistently supported preserving the land as greenspace and/or park. Consequently after a land-swap with the CRD in 2011 - 2013, Saanich rezoned its parcels to P4N - Natural Park, and committed to undertake a park planning process. The result is the Haro Woods Park Management Plan.

The Saanich-owned portion is referred to as 'Haro Woods Park', and the collective 4 parcels is referred to as "Haro Woods". Haro Woods Park is zoned P4-N – Natural Park. The zoning bylaw defines 'Natural Park' as *'a park devoted to the retention, preservation, and enhancement of natural, historic or landscape features and is used primarily for informal or passive recreation proposes.'*

This plan deals with the two Saanich-owned parcels, with reference to the CRD and UVic-owned parcels regarding partnerships, and public access and connection issues. Its purpose is to establish direction for Haro Woods Park's recreational program, establish a plan to protect the natural environment (including Finnerty Creek and its riparian area), and to suggest how functional access may be accommodated within the park and across the parcels that are not owned by Saanich. It also outlines the timeframe, and operational and budget details related to the plan's implementation.





## 2.2 History

Haro Woods lies in traditional Coast and Straits Salish Nations territory. Included in this group, the Songhees and Esquimalt First Nations (Lkwungen) incorporate land from the shores of the southern entrance of Haro Strait from Open Bay to Eagle Cove, and on to San Juan Island. Eight distinct families lived, fished, hunted and harvested these lands. Some lived in temporary and permanent settlements in protected bays along the waterfront from Turkey Head (present day Oak Bay Marina) to Cordova Bay, including campsites along the west coast of San Juan Island. There are no known archaeological sites in Haro Woods, but the general area is known to have been a highly active area in First Nations life, and much of the area around Haro Woods is considered to have a high likelihood of past activity.

Saanich acquired a parcel at 2435 Arbutus Road in 1961 for a potential sewage treatment plant. Ultimately the plant wasn't needed and other uses for the parcel were explored. In response to the community's wishes to preserve the parcel, Council identified it as 'public wild woodland' in the Cadboro Bay Local Area Plan (LAP) in 1992.

A team of volunteers, initiated by the Cadboro Bay Residents' Association and supported by Saanich, worked for a number of years (until 2006), to remove invasive plants from primarily the eastern-most parcel of the woods.



In 2006 the provincial government directed the CRD to plan for wastewater treatment for core-area municipalities. The CRD subsequently acquired the site at the corner of Finnerty and Arbutus Roads for a potential wastewater treatment facility site.

Research to determine the CRD parcel's suitability for the facility revealed that the adjacent Saanich-owned parcel was already impacted from underground infrastructure installations. To avoid heavy impact to the CRD's relatively intact parcel, a land exchange between Saanich and the CRD was completed in 2010 – 2013.

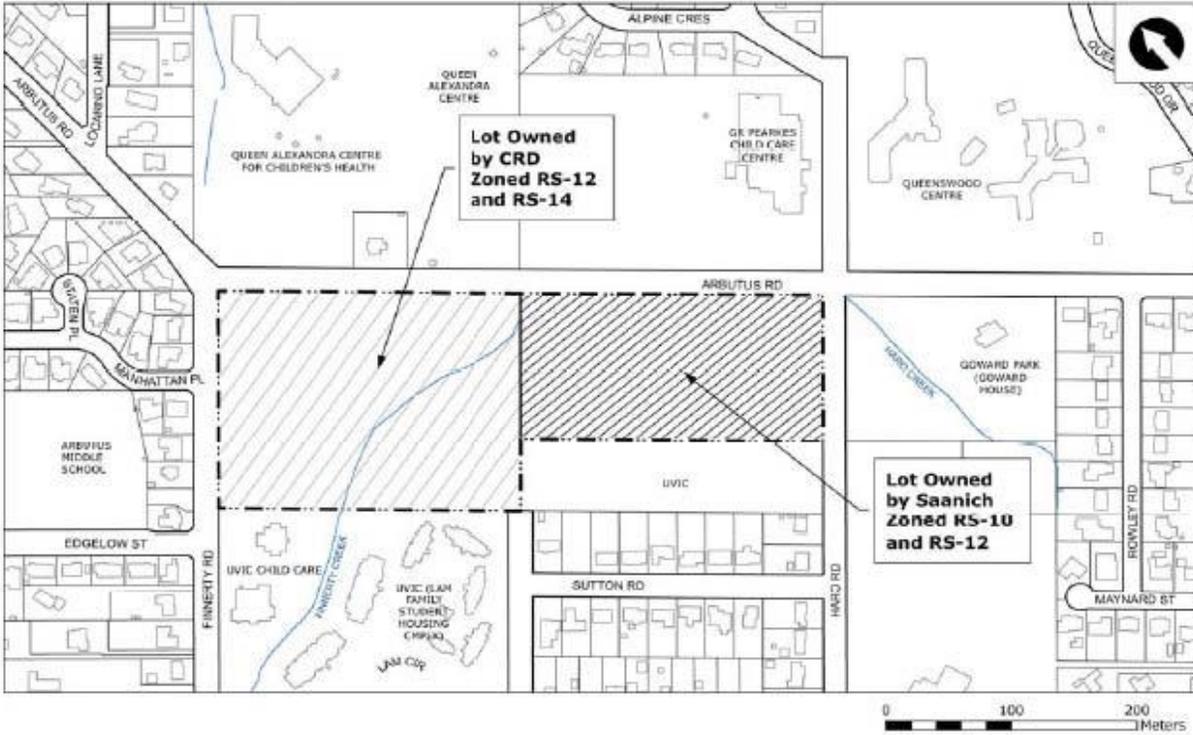
Public consultation and independent public input during this period revealed strong interest in preserving the greenspace, and the Saanich-owned parcels were re-zoned to P4-N Natural Park (see graphics on following page) after the exchange.



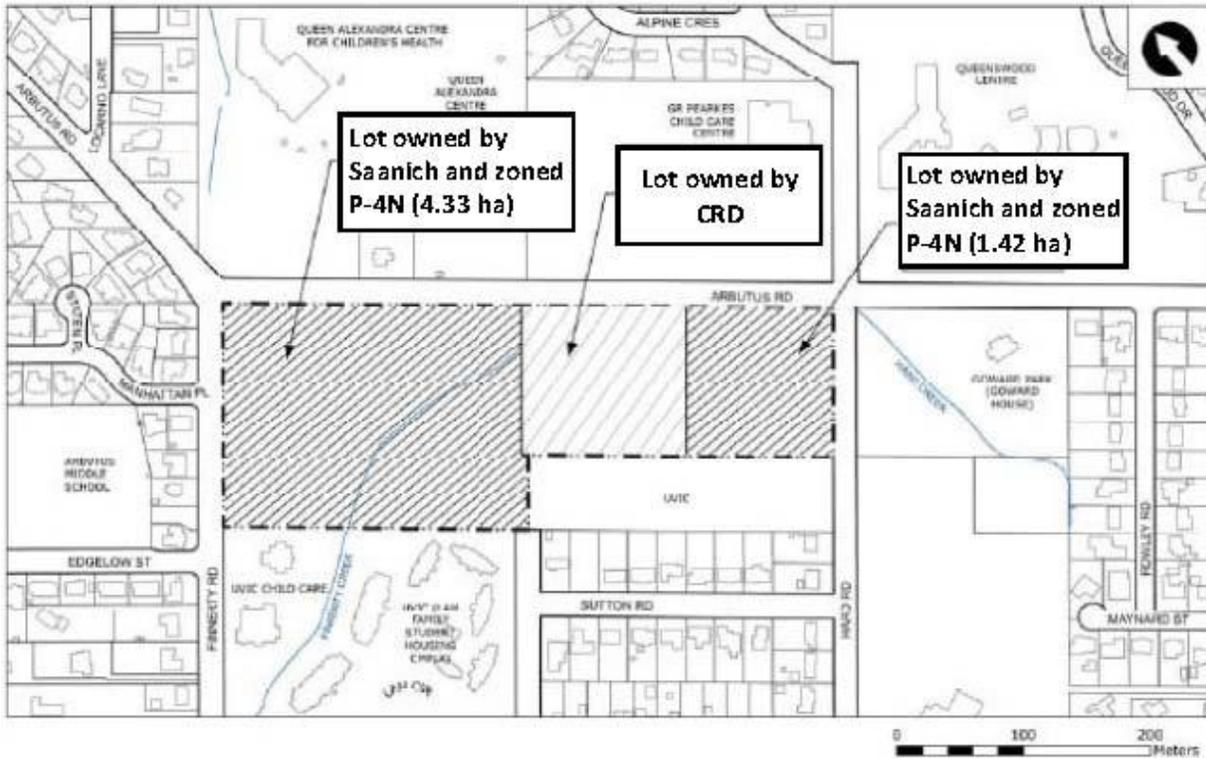
Typical footpath reflects route desired by park visitors. Note invasive English ivy.



Past configuration / ownership



Current configuration / ownership



## 2.3 Ownership

- District of Saanich

The District of Saanich purchased its first lot (3 ha / 7.4 ac) in 1961. A rezoning, subdivision and land swap with the CRD in 2011–2013 resulted in Saanich owning two parcels totalling 5.75 ha (14.2 ac).

- University of Victoria

In 1995 a 1.46 ha (3.6 ac) lot was transferred from the province to UVic, subject to a legal agreement which protects it from development.

In its 2016 Campus Plan, UVIC identifies its lot as a ‘perpetually protected area’ to ‘preserve the long-term health of the habitat for local flora and fauna’.

- Capital Regional District

The CRD will use its parcel (1.56 ha / 3.9 ac) to accommodate an attenuation tank(s), part of the region’s future wastewater treatment system.

The tank(s) are to be built by the end of 2020, with construction commencing in 2019. Related improvements within the Arbutus Road right-of-way (bike lane, swale/ditch or boulevard, and sidewalk) will be completed after the tank(s) are installed. The CRD will maintain public access across its parcel in response to conditions attached to the acquisition and rezoning of the lot in 2013.

## 2.4 Infrastructure

Sanitary sewer infrastructure currently exists on the site, including trunks and mains, overflow piping to the Finnerty outfall, and a waste-water metering station; associated lines extend into surrounding parcels (see following graphic). The attenuation tank(s) on the CRD’s parcel will connect to this system.



## Existing sewer infrastructure



## 2.5 Benefits of Being in Nature

Many people intuitively sense that spending time in green and natural spaces is good for them. In fact the World Health Organization Regional Office of Europe produced a report in 2016 supporting this theory. It summarizes evidence of the beneficial physical, mental, and emotional effects of urban greenspaces on people of all ages. There are a number of different, interacting mechanisms that connect greenspace with health benefits; they include: increased physical activity, reduction in human-related sound and increase in natural sound, improved air quality, reduced heat-island effect, engagement with nature and relaxation, stress reduction, optimized exposure to sunlight and improved sleep, enhanced immune function, and social interaction.



In 2017, Lancet Planet Health published results of a national study in Canada that examined associations between urban greenness and cause-specific mortality. It



found that even the risk of mortality decreases significantly in people who use greenspaces.

For children, access to green space can help develop motor skills as well as cognitive, emotional, and social skills. Children who use greenspace have shown improved cognitive development, reduced problematic behaviour and reduced risk of Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder. Play in greenspace also enables kids to develop social networks and friendships.

Children and adolescents are strongly attracted to risky and adventurous play. This desire is satisfied by wild and natural environments that offer challenge within an accessible context. Challenging play teaches children how to manage risk and cope with uncertainty. Young people build confidence and learn independence playing in wild, natural settings; important skills that contribute to a smooth transition into adulthood.

The collective benefits of green and natural spaces are significant for everyone. Haro Woods Park can offer all the benefits of a natural space, and present the opportunities for challenging play, casual walks, and observing nature. Ultimately spaces like Haro Woods Park improve the lives of all who visit.

## 2.6 Saanich Policy Overview and Guiding Documents

High-level direction for this plan has come from a number of sources:

- Official Community Plan Bylaw, 2008, No. 8940
- 2014-2018 Strategic Plan
- Parks, Recreation and Culture Master Plan 2013
- Youth Development Strategy and 5-Year Implementation Plan
- Older Adult Strategy
- Zoning Bylaw 2003
- Cadboro Bay Local Area Plan (2002)
- Saanich Park Property Inventory
- Streamside Development Permit Area Atlas
- Westland Resource Group Study
- Assessment of Haro Woods – prepared by UVic’s ‘Restoration of Natural Systems’ program students
- University of Victoria Campus Plan 2016
- Urban Forest Strategy
- Invasive Species Management Strategy
- Saanich Parks and Recreation Trail Guidelines 2007

A short description of each of these documents is given in Appendix A.



# 3. PARK RESOURCES

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Following is an overview of the existing physical and social characteristics of Haro Woods.

## 3.1 Environment

Westland Resource Group conducted research on Haro Woods in 2009 as part of the CRD's waste water site investigations. Their reports describe the physical site at that time, and it remains essentially unchanged today. Some of that information is referenced here.

- Forest and Understorey

Haro Woods is forested with a stand of mature, second-growth Douglas-fir with a native understorey. Its two most dominant plant communities are Douglas-fir/Dull Oregon Grape (CDFmm/01) and Douglas-fir/Arbutus (CDFmm/02). These, like many plant communities on southern Vancouver Island, are red-listed by the BC Conservation Data Centre (CDC). Red-listed communities are those at greatest risk of being lost, largely due to clearing land and harvesting resources for agriculture and development. Dominant tree species are Douglas-fir, Grand Fir, Western Hemlock, Arbutus, Bigleaf Maple, and Black Cottonwood.

- Vegetation Sensitivity

Vegetation sensitivity relates to the ecological integrity of a site, and the sensitivity of its plant communities and wildlife habitat to development. (See Westland's vegetation sensitivity map on the following page.)

There are 3 levels of sensitivity in Haro Woods:

High – Mature forest ecosystem with few recent canopy-disturbing activities. These areas are highly sensitive to development, have wildlife habitat features, and help form a contiguous ecosystem for local wildlife.

Medium – Forest ecosystem composed of earlier seral species and younger trees. These areas contribute to wildlife movements but provide less wildlife habitat features.

Low – Young forest and shrub ecosystem, with extensive ground disturbance including existing infrastructure, trails, and areas of earth and rock fill.





Westland's vegetation sensitivity map

Saanich's north-west lot is rated as having high vegetation sensitivity. It has a mature second-growth forest with good forest structure. Although there has been extensive disturbance of soil and understorey plants, and invasive plants are well established, the mature trees provide wildlife habitat and are part of a larger corridor for wildlife.

Saanich's southeast lot is less disturbed and supports more mature vegetation than the CRD's lot. It has a mix of high and medium sensitivity vegetation

The CRD's lot was cleared within the last 50 years to construct a sewage meter station and install underground wastewater infrastructure. This area has a young forest and shrub ecosystem with extensive ground disturbance, cleared areas, and trails. Most of this lot is low sensitivity, with some peripheral areas of high sensitivity.

Note that the UVic's lot was not included in Westland's assessment.

- Terrain

Haro Woods is sloping, rising approximately 31 m from its north-east corner to the south-west corner. Finnerty Creek lies in a ravine, approx. 10m deep at its deepest



point. The eastern-most portion of the woods is the lowest point in the immediate area, and has moisture loving vegetation including Black Cottonwood trees.

- Invasive Plants

Invasive plants are present on all parcels but are most dense on Saanich's western-most lot where English Ivy, Himalayan Blackberry and Spurge Laurel is described as 'continuous' and 'long-established'.

The CRD-owned parcel where infrastructure was installed has a medium density of invasive plants, with patches of Himalayan Blackberry, English Ivy, Scotch Broom, Spurge Laurel and non-native grasses.



Westland's invasive plant distribution map

The balance of the woods has low invasive plant density with 'sporadic distribution' of individual and small patches of Spurge Laurel, Scotch Broom, non-native grasses and English Ivy.

- Finnerly Creek

Finnerly Creek has a catchment area of approximately 15 ha (37 acres), including approximately 460 m of storm drain, which exits at the southern-most portion of Finnerly Creek (on the university's property). From there it flows north-east to



Arbutus Road where it is enclosed in pipe and ultimately empties into Finnerty Cove. The only portion of the creek that is not enclosed is on the University of Victoria's property and in Haro Woods. It is part of a watershed described as 'Urban influenced drainage to shoreline via storm drain networks'. It is subject to significant variation in flow levels, and is negatively affected by the large volumes of water that are collected and discharged over short periods of time.



Finnerty Creek's watershed

Within Haro Woods Park much of Finnerty Creek's riparian area has been significantly impacted by human activity. It has compacted soil, erosion, and little or no vegetation in some areas. Finnerty Creek is protected by the Streamside Protection Development Permit Area Guidelines, which prohibits any disturbance within 10 m of the creek, and requires an additional 20 m buffer zone.

- Wildlife

Wildlife trees, mature, large limbed trees, rotten logs, and other woody debris provide valuable wildlife habitat throughout Haro Woods. Black-tailed deer use the woods for trails, feeding and shelter, and a variety of birds nest here, including; Great Horned Owl, Cooper's Hawk, Barred Owl, American Robin, Chestnut-backed Chickadee, Pine Siskin, Winter Wren, House Finch, Dark-eyed Junco, Golden-



crowned Kinglet, Spotted Towhee, and Red-breasted Nuthatch (Hocking 2000), Orange-crowned Warbler and Swainson's Thrush.

- Human Impact

Tree houses, rope swings and other human-made structures are occasionally found and removed by Saanich staff. Soil and root disturbance, and loss of understory vegetation from bike trail and jump-building is evident in a number of areas. This activity also helps spread invasive plants; invasive plants provide less valuable habitat than the native plant habitat they displace.

- Volunteers

A dedicated group of local volunteers initiated by the community and supported by Saanich (Pulling Together) spent approximately 5,000 hours from 2004-2006 removing invasive plants in the eastern-most part of the woods.



Finnerty Creek



## 3.2 Recreation

Haro Woods has informal, organic trails and is valued most highly for its natural qualities. It is used for both passive and active recreation, and as a thoroughfare to surrounding destinations.

- Passive Recreation

Walking and dog-walking, family outings, family bike rides, exercise, relaxation and nature appreciation are common activities in Haro Woods. It is used for bird watching, meditation, photography, and restoration projects. Nature walks are popular with adjacent schools and day cares.

- Off-Trail Biking and Jump-Building (Active Recreation)

Biking off of trails and building trails and jumps ('off-trail biking and jump-building') has also been popular for many years prior to the land swap with the CRD. Off-trail biking and jump-building is a form of 'active recreation', and as such is not permitted under current zoning. It is unavailable elsewhere in the area.



### Bike jumps 2017

Unapproved bike jump-building damages the understorey, tree roots and soil. It also causes tension between those that build and use the jumps, and those that are concerned with the damage it causes.

- Biking Defined:

There are a number of different styles of biking that take place in Haro Woods. They have different objectives, involve different interaction with the landscape, and require different levels of skill.

Some styles involve meandering on existing trails commonly used by pedestrians (typically children with families, or young riders), some may ride through the woods as part of a longer journey from Point A to Point B, some ride through previously undisturbed vegetation, some use narrow single track informal trails, some require



long downhill slopes that lend themselves to building and executing trails and jumps, and some require varied terrain and grades.

For the purpose of the planning process and this management plan, different types of cycling were identified as occurring in the Woods. Slow speed riding on existing trails commonly used by pedestrians (typically children with families, or young riders) is referred to as **'recreational family cycling'**. Cyclists that may ride through the woods as part of a longer journey are referred to as **'commuter cyclists'**; and the term **'off-trail biking and jump-building'** is used as a catch-all to include all other styles of biking.



Westland's Land Use and Trails Map - underground infrastructure, trails and bike jumps in 2010

- Trails

A system of informal trails has developed over all 4 parcels. These trails reflect desired travel lines between residential areas, institutional lands to the north-east, adjacent schools and day cares, Goward Park, bus stops, and the University of Victoria. The Cadboro Bay Local Area Plan 2002 (being updated 2018-2019) envisions creating an east-west connection to contribute to a larger greenway system in the long term.



### 3.3 Key Issues and Resolutions

Haro Woods is a popular community natural space used primarily for; walking, nature appreciation, or biking on trails; as a connection to other destinations; and for biking off of trails ('off-trail biking and jump-building'). Saanich has maintained its parcels on a complaint-driven basis since acquiring them in 2013. Some environmental impact has occurred on the Saanich-owned parcels in the past as a result of the installation of underground services, and use of the north-east area as a dumping ground for construction rubble. Unmanaged off-trail biking and jump-building has created new unsanctioned trails, caused tension between competing interest groups, and impacted soils and vegetation. Invasive plants are established to varying degrees throughout the park.

Key issues to be addressed are:

1. Lack of an established recreational program and supporting infrastructure
2. Off trail biking and jump-building
3. Damage to native vegetation and soil
4. Degradation of Finnerty Creek
5. Invasive plants
6. Lack of communication with park visitors

A brief overview of these issues, and proposed resolutions follow. Details regarding the actions that will be taken to achieve the resolution are given in the Goals and Actions section.

#### **Issue 1 - Lack of an established recreational program and supporting infrastructure**

Continued use and accessibility of the woods by the general public is a key objective. Current activities can conflict physically and philosophically, accepted activities need to be clearly defined.

These activities also need to be properly and safely accommodated. Existing trails are very narrow and vegetation limits sight lines in some areas.

Resolution: Passive recreation will be accommodated in Haro Woods Park because it is compatible with the vision and zoning for the park. Main trails will be improved to ensure that citizens of all ages and abilities can access them. Recreational family cycling is a form of passive recreation and is strongly supported by the community and it will also be accommodated. Commuter cycling will not be accommodated. Bike lanes on Finnerty and Arbutus Roads will accommodate these cyclists. A minimal number of benches and interpretive signage will complement the passive recreation program (see the Goals and Actions section for more details).

Trail locations are based on existing trails. The many small informal trails in the woods fragment habitat and provide bare ground for invasive plants to colonize.



Some of these trails have been incorporated into the trail network to create functional loops and connections. The largest remaining informal trails will be closed and restored.

The University of Victoria and the Capital Regional District are committed to maintaining public access across their parcels in order to achieve a functional trail system across all 4 parcels. The trail system will consist of main (1 – 2m wide) and secondary (.5 – 1m wide) organic trails with granular material placed as needed for drainage and to prevent erosion.

Note that ‘rustic’ and ‘specialty’ trails are not technically considered ‘accessible’ because they are not paved. See Appendix A for more detail on trail types and the Parks Trail Guidelines.

### **Issue 2 - Off trail biking and jump-building**

Off-trail biking, and unapproved trail and jump-building have been happening in Haro Woods for many years, and have caused environmental and maintenance issues, and tension between user-groups. Some trails have been created by digging and shaping soil to create jumps and contours. This activity can disrupt other recreational activities, upset other park visitors, damage trees and the understorey, cause erosion and contribute to the spread of invasive plants.

In the past Saanich Parks has responded to complaints by removing constructed elements, and staff have met with individuals involved in an effort to curb these activities. This has proven to be ineffective and jumps consistently re-appear.

Resolution: Off-trail biking, and trail and jump-building is defined as ‘active recreation’, and as such is not a permitted use in Haro Woods (zoned P4-N).

An increased Saanich presence, and timely and consistent removal of ‘off-trail biking and jump-building’ related materials will be an important part of resolving this issue. Securing a suitable location for this activity elsewhere in Saanich is also important, and efforts are currently underway to accomplish this. These actions, together with informational and educational signage and materials, and showcased restoration projects, will help to shift non-compliant biking from Haro Woods in the long term.

### **Issue 3 - Damage to native vegetation and soil**

Off-trail travel by people and pets, as well as off-trail biking and jump-building can damage trees, understorey and soil.

Resolution: Impacted native vegetation will be assessed to create a restoration plan. Some informal trails will be closed and restored as per the trail plan on page 32. Selective use of protective split-rail fencing reinforced with educational information, including the importance of staying on trails (including pets), will help to protect the forest ecosystem and the creatures that live there.



#### **Issue 4 - Degradation of Finnerty Creek**

Finnerty Creek lies in a ravine where it enters the park from the UVic parcel. The banks of the ravine have been used for biking and walking, and much of its riparian vegetation is gone and the soil is compacted. The creek has also been impacted by large-volume storm water events, and sections of the creek bed are eroded.

Resolution: The hydrology of Finnerty Creek needs to be understood, and a plan to best manage its flows developed and implemented. Park visitor traffic, erosion and lack of riparian vegetation will be addressed through ecological restoration.

#### **Issue 5 - Invasive plants**

The disturbed ground associated with the past installation of underground services, and ongoing off- trail biking activity have helped invasive plants to become established. Invasive plants provide inferior habitat compared to the native vegetation they displace.

Resolution: Volunteers in Saanich's well established invasive plant removal program ('Pulling Together') are an essential part of managing invasive plants successfully. These efforts, in concert with restoration projects by Parks' staff, will help to restore the forest's health.

#### **Issue 6 - Lack of communication with park visitors**

There is inadequate signage to indicate Haro Wood Park's ownership, recreational program, trail system, or contact information. Educational information is also needed so that visitors know how, and why, to recreate in a manner that will preserve the environmental integrity of the woods.

Resolution: Establish an appropriate signage program to communicate ownership, education, regulation and way-finding in the park.

For organization and practicality, these issues have been grouped into general themes: Recreations, Protection and Access/Connection. They are discussed in greater detail in the Goals and Actions and Implementation sections in this plan.



Protective split rail fencing installed by Parks in 2018



## 4. PLANNING PROCESS

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This Management Plan relied on public participation to identify community values, and to create the Vision statement and Goals that are the framework for its implementation. Public input from the 2010–2013 waste water treatment site–related subdivision and rezoning process was included, as well as from four public events and a number of Haro Woods Advisory Group meetings over the same period. In addition, staff engaged with both the Parks, Trails and Recreation and the Environment and Natural Areas Advisory Committees in short workshops and presentations at key times throughout the planning process.

### **International Association for Public Participation (IAP2)**

Saanich Parks uses the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) model when undertaking projects requiring public participation. This is consistent with District of Saanich policy for all community engagement. This model has five levels of public involvement ranging from the lowest level of “inform” up to “empower” at the highest level. Parks staff retained a professional facilitator certified in IAP2 to assist with the public participation aspect of this plan. The overall level on the participation spectrum was to ‘consult’ in order to obtain public feedback on analysis, develop alternatives and/or decisions. The promise associated with the Consult level of input is:

“Saanich promises to keep you informed throughout the Haro Woods Park management process, to listen to, and acknowledge your concerns and aspirations, and to provide feedback on how public input influenced the final Haro Woods Park management plan”.

At times higher levels of involvement were used (i.e., Involve and Collaborate). The issues of ‘off-trail biking and jump-building’ and trails were particularly contentious and complex, and involved a significant amount of work with the Advisory Group.

### **Stakeholders**

- Haro Woods Advisory Group

An 11 member Advisory Group (AG) was created to help ensure that public participation was meaningful, and that the Management Plan reflects community values. It consisted of representatives from key stakeholder groups and the community, including: the Cadboro Bay Residents’ Association, Frank Hobbs Elementary and Arbutus Middle School Parents’ Advisory Committees, Friends of Haro Woods, Saanich’s Parks, Trails and Recreation Advisory Committee, Saanich’s Environment and Natural Areas Advisory Committee, University of Victoria Childcare, two youth representatives and two general public



representatives. Over the course of this plan's development membership in the Advisory Group has varied slightly, and consisted of nine members at its conclusion.

Key Roles of the Advisory Group were to:

- Advise on public engagement techniques to ensure effective outreach.
- Promote the project and public participation opportunities within the community.
- Provide feedback and input to staff on draft plan content throughout the project planning process.

▪ Government Agencies

The Songhees and Esquimalt First Nations, and the Capital Regional District were contacted and kept informed throughout the plan's progress.

▪ Land Owners

Haro Woods is a collection of four lots; two are owned by Saanich (Haro Woods Park) and the other two are owned by the University of Victoria (UVic) and the Capital Regional District (CRD)

The University of Victoria

The University of Victoria's 1.46 ha (3.6 ac) lot is identified as a 'perpetually protected area' to 'preserve the long-term health of the habitat for local flora and fauna' in its 2016 Campus Plan. Saanich staff have met and corresponded with the Director of the Office of Campus Planning and Sustainability' over the course of this plan's development to ensure a free flow of information.

UVic looks forward to working in partnership on the development and maintenance of trails on the UVic parcel of Haro Woods. Improvements would be completed under a works and service agreement and all agreed to trail works and maintenance will be funded by Saanich. UVic does not permit any ecological degradation to the property, which can be caused off-trail cycling and jumps. Its practice is to quickly remove and repair associated disturbance. The University reserves its right to limit access to this parcel to fulfill its academic mandate as necessary

The Capital Regional District

The Capital Regional District's property was acquired and zoned to accommodate attenuation tank(s), part of the region's future wastewater treatment system. The CRD is required to maintain public access across its parcel. CRD officials have confirmed that trails on their property will be incorporated into the overall trail system.



- Other stakeholders include:
  - Cadboro Bay Residents' Association
  - Gordon Head Residents' Association
  - Frank Hobbs Elementary School
  - Arbutus Global Middle School
  - Gordon Head Middle School
  - Cedar Hill Middle School
  - Mount Douglas High School
  - University of Victoria Environmental Studies program
  - Arbutus Grove Children's Centre (daycare)
  - G.R. Pearkes Child Care Services
  - UVic Childcare
  - Vancouver Island Health Association
  - Children's Health Foundation
  - Queen Alexander Centre for Children's Health
  - Friends of Haro Woods
  - South Island Mountain Bike Society
  - Victoria Natural History Society
  - Habitat Acquisition Trust
  - Garry Oak Ecosystem Recovery Team
  - Ancient Forest Alliance
  - Native Plant Study Group
  - Pulling Together Volunteers
  - Goward House

## **Engagement**

### Past Public Input 2011–2013

Extensive public consultation was conducted while analysing potential wastewater treatment sites in the CRD. One of the sites that was investigated was the then CRD-owned parcel at the corner of Finnerty and Arbutus Roads. Further consultation was conducted during the process of swapping ownership of this parcel with another Saanich-owned parcel (see graphic on page 6), and rezoning. The outcome of these discussions lead to the preservation of more forested land and created a larger land base under Saanich Parks' management. The input from these events was presented at public events in 2016 – 2017, and incorporated into the feedback that influenced the Vision and Goals.

### Key Public Consultation Events 2016–2018

- October 2016, Public workshop and forest walks, and related survey
- January 2017, Public Open House, and related survey
- November 2017, Public Open House and Presentations, and related survey
- April 2018, Public Open House, and related survey



A total of 838 survey responses were collected over the course of public consultation.

During these events members of the community and stakeholders participated in each step of the plan's evolution, including establishing an overarching Vision, and Goals for key themes which emerged. Key themes are:

- Recreation
- Protection of the environment
- Access / Connection in and through the site

More information about the planning process, summaries of Public Events, Haro Woods Advisory Group meeting minutes, and survey results are included in the appendices.



Participants at first Haro Woods workshop



Example of public input on values and vision gathered at open house



# 5. VISION AND GOALS

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## Creating the Vision, Goals and Actions

A series of facilitated public events and Advisory Group meetings were held to establish the Vision and supporting Goals for Haro Woods Park.

At the first public event in October 2016, participants identified what they value most about the Woods, and related key ideas to reflect in the Vision statement. The Advisory Group subsequently used this information to draft a Vision, and began to develop supporting Goals.

The draft Vision was finalized, and Goals were further developed at the second public event in January 2017. The Haro Woods Advisory Group, working with the facilitator and staff, subsequently finalized the Vision and Goals which are included in this plan. The detailed Actions were written by staff and reviewed by the Advisory Group. Implementing these Actions will ultimately realize the Vision.

## Vision

The Vision describes the ideal future of Haro Woods Park as:

***'Haro Woods is a healthy urban forest. It is a functioning ecosystem that welcomes respectful use.'***

### PAST AND CURRENT KEY VALUES

- Protect the natural environment
- Maintain unrestricted access across all parcels
- Allow youth to explore and play
- Opinions divided on active recreation (expressed by bikes) vs. passive recreation.



## 5.1 Goal Themes

Past and current public input reveal THEMES in key values and concerns. These themes have been adopted as the framework for identifying and organizing goals at public events, and in the Management Plan:

The themes:

- Recreation – with 1 supporting Goal.
- Protection – with 3 supporting Goals.
- Access / Connection – with 3 supporting Goals.

### Recreation Theme

- **Recreation Goal:** Enable respectful use and enjoyment of the forest provided visits don't negatively impact the forest environment.

### Protection Theme

- **Water Goal:** To protect and preserve the integrity of Finnerty Creek to create a functioning, healthy waterway.
- **Forest, Animal and Plant Goal:** Support the urban forest and protect wildlife habitat by preserving and maintaining the natural succession process.
- **Stewardship, Education and Communication Goal:** Ensure the long term health of Haro Woods by building partnerships with key stakeholders to promote ongoing education and stewardship.

### Access/Connection Theme

- **Access Goal:** Maintain public access throughout the park and Haro Woods parcels (existing UVic, CRD and Saanich parcels).
- **Signage Goal:** Enhance the visitor experience by providing clear directions for respectful use.
- **Trail Conditions Goal:** Create a minimal trail system with a focus on pedestrian-only trails and some multi-use trails.





North-east parcel. Note construction debris and signs of off trail biking. Photo taken 2016.



Bike-jump building typically uses excavated soil and available organic material as well as carpet and other foreign material.



# 6. GOALS AND ACTIONS

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The following framework of Goals was developed with stakeholders during the public consultation process. Actions have been presented within this framework and many ideas are interconnected. It is important to read all goals and actions together to gain a full understanding of the intended implementation program.

## 6.1 Recreation Theme

### Recreation Goal:

*‘Enable respectful use and enjoyment of the forest provided visits don’t negatively impact the forest environment.’*

#### Actions:

- A **Identify**
  - Passive recreational activities will be accommodated including: walking, dog walking, and recreational family cycling on trails.
  
- B **Accommodate**
  - Improve existing trails to accommodate passive activities. Close and restore some informal trails as per the trail plan on pg 32 (see 6.3/Trails Conditions).
  - Identify main and secondary trail entrances, and land ownership on site.
  - Develop and implement way-finding signage at key trail locations.
  - Install amenities to enhance the passive recreation program at strategic resting and viewing locations (benches and interpretive signs).
  
- C **Promote**
  - Provide educational information to the biking and wider community to discourage off-trail biking and jump-building.
  - Conduct a public education program to encourage responsible use of the park (see 6.2/Stewardship, Education and Communication Goal, and Section 7 ‘Implementation’).
  
- D **Manage**
  - Monitor park use via Parks staff and Parks’ ‘calls-for-service’ system, and address user conflict / inappropriate use as necessary.
  - Remove unapproved bike jumps and trails in a timely and consistent manner.



## 6.2 Protection Theme

### Water Goal:

*‘To protect and preserve the integrity of Finnerty Creek to create a functioning, healthy waterway.’*

#### Actions:

- A **Develop**
  - A hydrological assessment and improvement feasibility study for Finnerty Creek.
  - A riparian area restoration plan.
  
- B **Communicate and Cooperate**
  - Communicate and partner with the University of Victoria to share hydrological study findings and recommendations.
  - Install educational signs to explain riparian restoration projects and the impact of off-trail travel.
  
- C **Protect**
  - Install appropriate fencing to protect creek and riparian areas with associated educational signage in key areas as necessary.

### Forest, Animal and Plant Goal:

*‘Support the urban forest and protect wildlife habitat by preserving and maintaining the natural succession process.’*

#### Actions:

- A **Support Native Vegetation**
  - Assess the forest’s health and identify conservation and restoration project areas - Conserve native vegetation in intact areas, and restore native vegetation in highly disturbed areas.  
Examples of project areas are those impacted by off-trail travel-related activity, areas subject to erosion, and trails to be closed based on the trail plan (page 32).
  - Identify conservation and restoration measures (prescriptions) to be implemented in project areas. Restoration may include removing invasive plant species and replanting with native plants. Conservation may include physical barriers.
  - Support conservation and restoration project sites with educational information.



## B Control Invasive Plants

- Encourage and support Pulling Together volunteers.
- Involve Parks staff as resources permit.
- Identify invasive plant outbreak areas that will be included in conservation / restoration projects.

## C Maintain

- Adapt maintenance practices as necessary to allow the natural succession process to occur:
  - Maintain the forest canopy and native understorey composition.
  - Leave organic debris on the ground.
  - Leave wildlife trees standing.
  - Trees that must be felled for safety reasons will be left on the forest floor.
  - Prune and remove vegetation, including trees, only as required for safety and functionality of trails.

## D Monitor

- Monitor park for new invasive plant outbreaks, vegetation and soil disturbance, and address as necessary.
- Report and remove biking related elements in a consistent and timely manner.



Constructing bike jumps destroys plants, erodes soil and can destabilize trees

## Stewardship, Education, and Communication Goal:

*‘Ensure the long term health of Haro Woods by building partnerships with key stakeholders to promote ongoing education and stewardship.’*

### Actions

#### A Promote and Educate

- Provide adjacent schools and day cares, the cycling community, and other key stakeholders with educational information about responsible use of the park.
- Celebrate and explain conservation and restoration projects within the park, and to adjacent neighbours and schools.
- Strive to work with First Nations to reflect their heritage in the future interpretive signage.
- Develop visitor education signs:
  - Interpretive signs – Explain the impacts of off-trail travel, explain natural succession, highlight natural features and restoration efforts.
  - Educational signs – Highlight restoration projects, and provide contact and regulatory information including Saanich Parks and Pulling Together.

#### B Communicate

- Provide the Management Plan and relevant information to CRD, UVic, and other key stakeholders.
- Maintain annual communication regarding achievement of Goals, common concerns, and issues to address.

## 6.3 Access/Connection Theme

### Access Goal

*‘Maintain public access throughout the park and Haro Woods parcels (existing UVic, CRD and Saanich parcels).’*

### Actions

#### A Fencing and Trails

- Use fencing or barriers only as necessary for visitor safety and to protect conservation and restoration areas.
- Coordinate with other property owners to ensure a continuous and functional public trail network across all parcels.



## Signage Goal

*‘Enhance the visitor experience by providing clear directions for respectful use.’*

### Actions

#### A Inform

- Identify park and trail entrances.
- Install educational signs with regulatory and contact information. Focus on staying on trails (people and pets), appropriate family biking, protecting the environment.
- Provide trail orientation map(s) at key locations.

## Trail Conditions Goal

*‘Create a minimal trail system with a focus on pedestrian-only trails and some multi-use trails.’*

### Actions

#### A Choose Trails

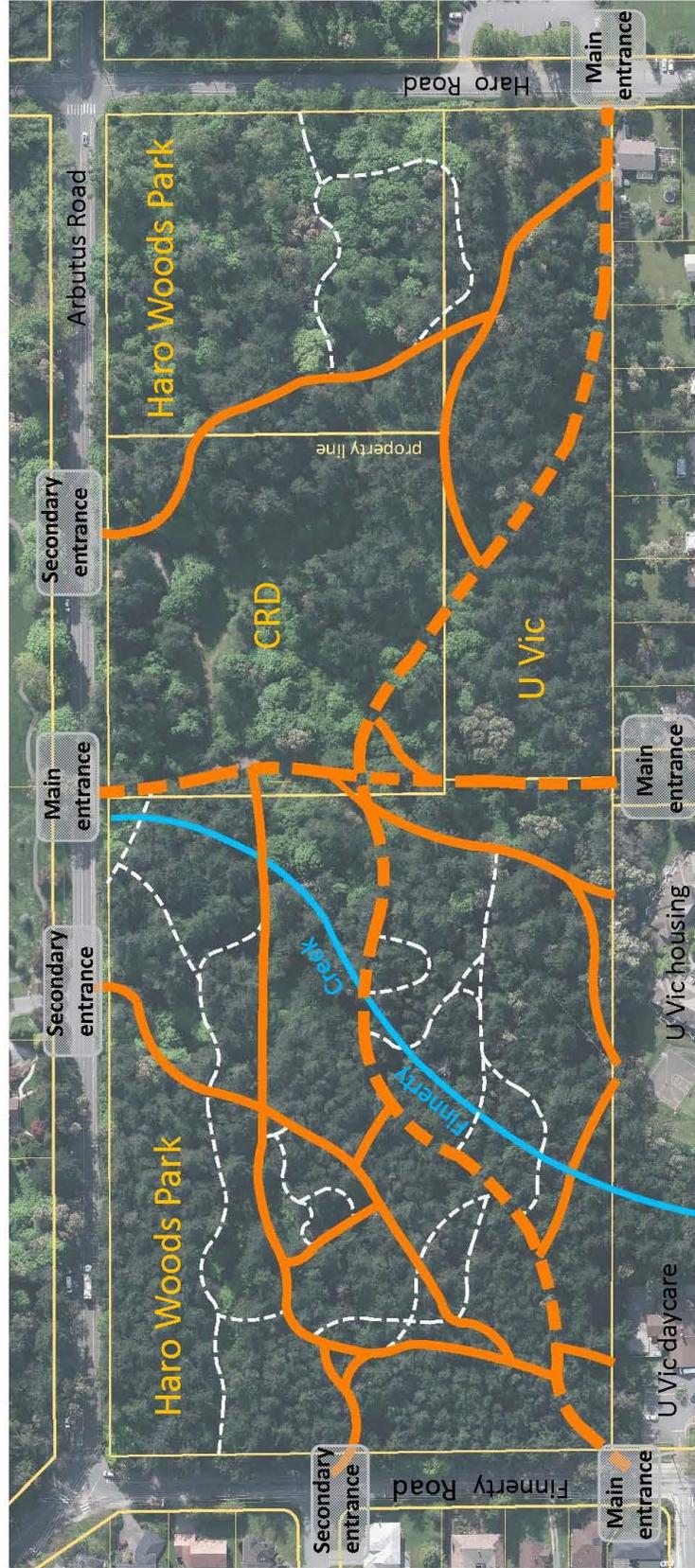
- Finalize a trail plan based on existing trails network.
- Identify trail sections that require improved drainage or alternate surface.

#### B Construction and Decommission

- Improve main trails 1-2 m wide (classified as ‘rustic’ trails), and secondary trails .5-1 m wide, (classified as ‘specialty’ trails) as per the Parks Trail Guidelines.
- Decommission and restore some informal trails as per the trail plan page 32 (see section 6.2).
- Trail surface to be organic material, granular material to be used as necessary to achieve adequate drainage for year round use.
- Boardwalks (if required) to be constructed as necessary with minimal impact on vegetation and hydrology.



# Haro Woods Trail Plan



## Legend

-  Main trails 1 – 2 m width
-  Secondary trails .5 – 1 m wide
-  Trails to decommission and restore

- All trails are existing. Trail surfaces are to be bare earth with granular material as necessary for drainage and to prevent erosion.
- Trails not needed for loops or connections are to be decommissioned and restored.



# 7. IMPLEMENTATION

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## 7.1 Partnerships, Public Education and Outreach

This Management Plan needs on-going support from Saanich Council, the community, park visitors and volunteers to succeed. This support can be built through partnerships with stakeholders, and through education and outreach in the park itself.

A cooperative partnership with the University of Victoria and the Capital Regional District will help to ensure that Haro Woods will be connected with a functional public trail system, and that natural areas are managed consistently. An education campaign directed at nearby residents, schools, university student housing, and formal cycling groups explaining the rationale for discontinuing off-trail biking activity, can help to foster good stewardship among those communities.

Stakeholders and community organizations can also become champions, and help to establish a standard of respectful use through communication with their wider communities. The District of Saanich can help to promote responsible park use through its website and communications (e.g., social media).

Within the park, educational signs about natural features and their sensitivity to off-trail biking will help to raise awareness, and may help to decrease damaging activity. On-site information about the Saanich Pulling Together volunteer program can also increase awareness and support. Educated and interested park visitors may become informal park stewards, helping to educate other visitors and further promote responsible park use.

Together these measures will help to promote awareness and respect for Haro Woods Park, and will normalize the respectful use that fosters a healthy urban forest.



## 7.2 Budget

### Operational Considerations:

The measures needed to implement the Haro Woods Park Management Plan fall into the following operational categories:

**Development** – Park improvements need to be incorporated into Saanich Parks’ annual work plan and capital budgets. Budget permitting, trail improvements and signs will be completed within the first three years.

**Maintenance** – Any infrastructure that is developed, such as trails, signs and furniture will need to be added to the Parks operations budget and included in Saanich Parks’ regular maintenance schedule. This will include removal of biking-related structures.

**Urban forest / hazard tree management** – Hazard trees are assessed and managed according to the International Society of Arboriculture (ISA) standards. Management can mean pruning, conversion to wildlife trees, or removal if they are within falling distance of trails.

**Volunteer recruitment** – Community volunteers are the main resource for controlling invasive plants. Saanich will be a supportive partner of their work.

### Budget:

Operational and capital estimates are provided and will be considered as part of the annual budget process:

Recreation		
<b>Short Term (1 – 3 years)</b>	1. Develop signs to indicate ownership, trail system, and the recreational program. (capital)	\$12,000 total (including entrance signs and 2 tabletop signs)
	2. Improve select trails and trail entrances to accommodate intended recreation. (capital)	\$30,000 total
	3. Conduct initial hazard tree assessment and mitigation work. (operating)	\$3,000 total



## Recreation

<b>Short Term (1 – 3 years)</b>	4. Install 2 benches. (capital)	\$3,000 total
	5. Develop and distribute educational material regarding respectful use. (operating)	\$3,000 total (1,000 / yr)
	6. Remove off-trail biking and jump-building related elements in a consistent and timely manner. (operating)	\$35,000 total (\$15,000 first year, \$10,000 years 2 and 3)
<b>Mid to Long Term (4 – 10 years)</b>	1. Complete routine hazard tree mitigation work as required. (operating)	\$7,000 total (\$1,000 / yr)
	2. Remove off-trail biking and jump-building related elements in a consistent and timely manner. (operating)	\$21,000 total (\$3,000 / yr)
	3. Complete routine maintenance on trails and furniture. (operating)	\$28,000 total (\$4,000 / yr)

## Protection

<b>Short Term (1 – 3 years)</b>	1. Complete a hydrological assessment and improvement feasibility study for Finnerty Creek, and implement as funding allows. (capital)	Cost to be determined. Approximately \$60,000 total (\$10,000 assessment, year 1, \$25,000 implementation years 2 and 3)
	2. Develop and install interpretive and educational signs to highlight natural features and restoration projects, and explain how and why to protect them. (capital/operating)	\$5,000 total (1 interpretive sign) (capital)  \$3,000 total (educational signs) (operating)



## Protection

<b>Short Term (1 – 3 years)</b>	3. Install split-rail protective fencing as necessary. (capital)	\$4,500 total
	4. Assess impacted native vegetation and create a restoration/ conservation plan. Begin to implement plan (excluding Finnerty Creek restoration). (operating)	\$34,500 total (\$11,500 / yr )
	5. Work with volunteers (Pulling Together - \$2,000 / yr) and local schools (\$2,500 / yr) to combat invasive plants and complete restoration projects. (operating)	\$13,500 total (\$4,500 / yr)
	6. Provide educational material to key stakeholders to explain how and why to recreate respectfully. (operating)	\$1,000 total
<b>Mid to Long Term (4 – 10 years)</b>	1. Implement recommendations of hydrological assessment and improvement feasibility study for Finnerty Creek as funds permit. (capital)	\$25,000 (year 4)
	2. Continue to implement restoration / conservation plan (including Finnerty Creek). (operating)	\$49,000 total (\$7,000 / yr)
	3. Continue to work with volunteers (Pulling Together - \$1,500 / yr) and local schools (\$2,500 / yr) to combat invasive plants and complete restoration projects. (operating)	\$28,000 total (\$4,000 / yr)
	4. Continue to provide educational material to explain how and why to recreate respectfully. (operating)	\$1,000 total



## Access / Connection

<b>Short Term (1 – 3 years)</b>	1. Communicate and coordinate with other Haro Woods property owners (UVic, CRD) to ensure a continuous and functional trail system. (operating)	Included within staffs' duties
	2. Install trail markers at key locations to support trail / way finding maps. (capital)	\$3,000 total
<b>Mid to Long Term (4 – 10 years)</b>	1. Continue to communicate and coordinate with other Haro Woods property owners (UVic, CRD) to ensure a continuous and functional trail system. (operating)	Included within staffs' duties
	2. Complete routine maintenance on trails and marker posts. (operating)	\$7,000 total (\$1,000 / yr)



## 8. CONCLUSION

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Despite its challenges Haro Woods Park has always been a valued community asset. For more than two years the community has been actively involved in establishing the plan's overarching Vision, and Goals for ensuring the park will continue to exist as an important green space that provides passive recreation and community access, and is protected well into the future.

Recreation was the most difficult issue to address, and how to manage off-trail biking and jump-building was a controversial issue throughout the process. An extensive public consultation process including four public events, many meetings, presentations and over 800 survey responses revealed that a significant number of residents supported limited and contained off trail bike riding and jump-building. However numbers were insufficient to justify rezoning the park. Efforts to accommodate this activity elsewhere in Saanich are underway with the goal to shift it from Haro Woods.

Education will be critical to the outcome of all aspects of this management plan. Information within the community and the park itself will explain the importance of respectful use and conservation measures. The attitude and actions of the people who visit the woods, together with Saanich Parks, will uphold the Vision and determine the success of this plan.



# 9. DEFINITIONS

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## Respectful Use

For the purpose of this plan, 'respectful use' is defined as an activity that does not negatively impact the natural environment. Examples of activities that would be considered disrespectful include digging, bike jump or trail building, prolonged travel through vegetation or within Finnerty Creek's riparian zone, deliberately damaging vegetation, and leaving garbage or dog waste behind.

## Ecological Conservation ('Conservation')

To promote the resilience of ecosystems, species and habitat by protecting and managing biodiversity and natural resources.

## Ecological Restoration ('Restoration')

The process of assisting the recovery of ecosystems that have been degraded, damaged, or destroyed.

## Urban Forest

Urban forest is defined as "the sum of all trees and their associated ecosystems within the municipality, including all trees on public, private, commercial and institutional lands, and in all road right-of-ways." The urban forest is recognized as having high ecological, and aesthetic, financial and psychological importance.

## Forest

As used in the Vision statement is meant to include all the natural components of a healthy forest, including plants and animals, and the natural succession and hydrological processes.

## Passive Recreation

Passive recreation is defined as '*Outdoor recreational activities, such as nature observation, hiking, and canoeing or kayaking, that require a minimum of facilities or development and that have minimal environmental impact on the recreational site.*' or sites that are maintained '*for the health and well-being of the public and for the preservation of wildlife and the environment.*'

## Active Recreation

Active recreation is defined as '*Outdoor recreational activities, such as sports, playground activities, and the use of motorized vehicles, that require extensive facilities or development or that have a considerable environmental impact on the recreational site.*'



## Biking

- 'Recreational family cycling' is slow speed riding on existing trails commonly used by pedestrians (typically children with families, or young riders). 'Recreational family cycling' is passive recreation.
- 'Off-trail biking and jump-building' is used as a catch-all for all styles of biking that do not fall into either of the above categories. 'Off-trail biking and jump-building' is active recreation.

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