



REGIONAL PARKS, TRAILS & WATER ACCESS STRATEGY

FOR THE REGIONAL DISTRICT OF CENTRAL KOOTENAY (RDCK)

JUNE 2026

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS



The RDCK acknowledges and respects the Indigenous peoples within whose traditional lands our regional parks and trails are on.

Development of the Regional Parks, Trails, and Water Access Strategy was a collaborative effort. The Regional District of Central Kootenay wishes to acknowledge and thank everyone that took part in the planning process. Whether you took part in a trail head roving kiosk, an interview, or shared your ideas through one of online surveys, interactive online web map or sent us a letter, the input you shared has helped to ensure that this plan reflects the diverse interests and perspectives of the RDCK.

RDCK Regional Parks, Trails, and Water Access Working Group

The RDCK Board and staff would also like to thank the members of the Regional Parks and Trails Advisory Group who dedicated significant time and effort to help guide the planning process and the plan content. Thank You!

- Director R. Tierney, Electoral Area B
- Director H. Hanegraaf, Electoral Area J
- Director D. Lockwood, Village of Salmo

RDCK Staff

- Joe Chirico, General Manager Community Services
- Mark Crowe, Recreation and Parks Planner
- Cary Gaynor, Regional Parks and Trails Manager
- Trisha Davison, Regional Manager - Recreation and Client Services
- Craig Stanley, Regional Manager – Operations and Asset Management

Consulting Team

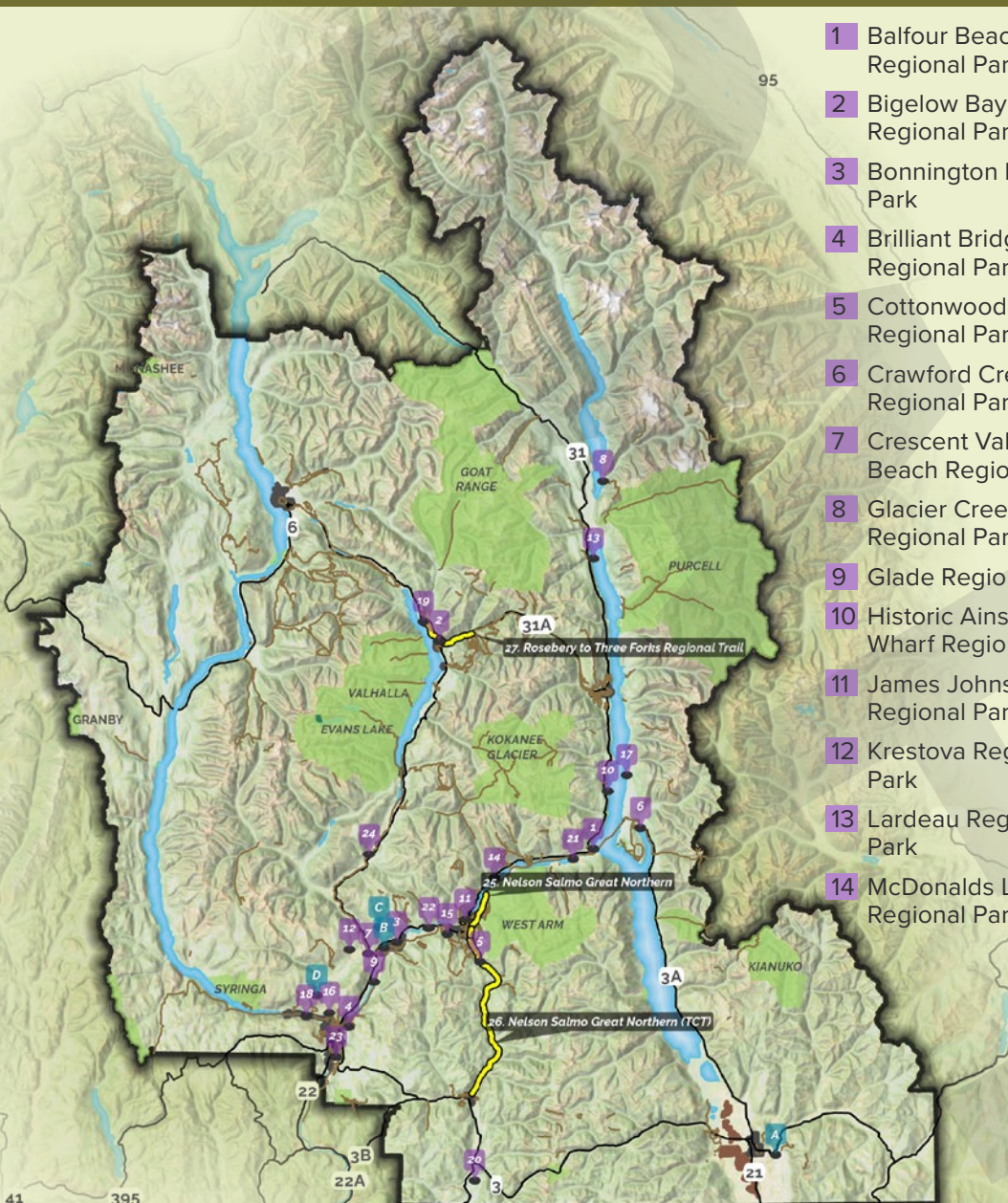
RC Strategies

- Clara-Jane Blye, Senior Consultant
- Justin Ellis, Partner
- Devon Jenkins, GIS & Spatial Analytics Lead

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Regional District of Central Kootenay (RDCK) is home to an extraordinary network of parks, trails, shorelines, rivers, lakes, and natural areas that contribute to the region's quality of life, environmental health, and outdoor recreation opportunities. These places connect residents and visitors to nature, support active lifestyles, protect important ecological and cultural values, and strengthen communities across the region. The Parks, Trails, and Water Access Strategy provides a long-term roadmap to guide the planning, management, stewardship, and sustainable growth of the RDCK's regional parks, trails, and water access system over the coming decades. Developed through extensive research, site assessments, stakeholder engagement, Indigenous outreach, public consultation, and collaboration with the Board of Directors and staff, the Strategy establishes a shared vision and clear direction for the future.

RDCK Regional Parks



- | | |
|---|--|
| 1 Balfour Beach Regional Park | 15 Morning Mountain Regional Park |
| 2 Bigelow Bay Regional Park | 16 Pass Creek Regional Park |
| 3 Bonnington Regional Park | 17 Riondel Regional Park |
| 4 Brilliant Bridge Regional Park | 18 Robson Boat Ramp Regional Park |
| 5 Cottonwood Lake Regional Park | 19 Rosebery Parklands Regional Park |
| 6 Crawford Creek Regional Park | 20 Rosebud Lake Regional Park |
| 7 Crescent Valley Beach Regional Park | 21 Sunshine Bay Regional Park |
| 8 Glacier Creek Regional Park | 22 Taghum Beach Regional Park |
| 9 Glade Regional Park | 23 Waterloo Eddy Regional Park |
| 10 Historic Ainsworth Wharf Regional Park | 24 Winlaw Regional and Nature Park |
| 11 James Johnstone Regional Park | 25 Nelson Salmo Great Northern Trail |
| 12 Krestova Regional Park | 26 Pulpit Rock Access Regional Park |
| 13 Lardeau Regional Park | 27 Rosebery to Threeforks Regional Trail |
| 14 McDonalds Landing Regional Park | A 3823 Goat Canyon Road |
| | B Campbell Fields |
| | C Former Old School House Site |
| | D Robson Community Park |

What We Heard

Throughout the engagement process, residents consistently expressed strong support for protecting natural areas while improving access to outdoor recreation opportunities. Key themes included:

- Improving and protecting public water access.
- Expanding and connecting regional trail networks.
- Conserving environmentally sensitive areas and important landscapes.
- Enhancing accessibility and inclusion.
- Supporting recreation opportunities close to home.
- Strengthening stewardship, partnerships, and volunteer involvement.
- Improving long-term planning, maintenance, and investment in regional assets.

Strategy Process

Developed through extensive research, site assessments, stakeholder engagement, Indigenous outreach, public consultation, and collaboration with the Board of Directors and staff, the Strategy establishes a shared vision and clear direction for the future.



Vision

The RDCK has a vibrant and resilient system of regional parks, trails, and water access sites where people and communities connect, play, and thrive through nature. These spaces provide inclusive and accessible opportunities for recreation, foster a strong sense of belonging and connection to place, and reflect the diverse and evolving needs of the region. Through thoughtful stewardship, meaningful partnerships, and responsible service delivery, RDCK parks, trails, and water access protect cultural and ecological values while supporting community well-being and long-term environmental resilience.

Strategic Directions

The Strategy is organized around six interconnected goals:



Provide Outstanding Nature-Based Recreation Opportunities

Enhance the quality, diversity, and sustainability of outdoor recreation opportunities while protecting the character and values that make the region unique.



Enhance Access to Regional Parks and Trails

Improve connectivity, accessibility, and opportunities for residents and visitors to experience nature and outdoor recreation.



Advance Inclusion, Equity, and Welcoming Experiences Across Regional Parks and Trails

Support recreation opportunities that are welcoming, accessible, and inclusive for people of all ages, abilities, backgrounds, and identities.



Protect and Steward Regionally Significant Natural and Cultural Areas

Conserve important ecological, cultural, and heritage values while supporting responsible recreation and environmental stewardship.



Strengthen Community and Regional Partnerships

Build collaborative relationships with Indigenous communities, local governments, stewardship organizations, trail associations, volunteers, community groups, and other partners.



Ensure Operational Excellence and Fiscal Responsibility

Improve governance, asset management, service delivery, planning processes, and decision-making tools to ensure the long-term sustainability of the regional system.

Looking Ahead

The Parks, Trails, and Water Access Strategy recognizes that the region's parks, trails, and water access areas are among its most valued public assets. Implementing the Strategy will require collaboration, investment, stewardship, and ongoing engagement with communities and partners across the region.

By taking a balanced approach that integrates recreation, conservation, accessibility, partnerships, and responsible asset management, the RDCK can continue to provide meaningful outdoor experiences while protecting the natural and cultural landscapes that define the Central Kootenay region for future generations.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

- 1 INTRODUCTION 1**
 - 1.1 STRATEGY PURPOSE 2
 - 1.2 COMMITMENT TO RECONCILIATION, RELATIONSHIPS, AND PARTNERSHIPS 3
 - 1.3 THE PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT PROCESS 4
 - 1.4 APPLICATION OF THE STRATEGY 7
 - 1.5 OPPORTUNITIES FOR SYSTEM IMPROVEMENT AND ENHANCING RESILIENCY 8
 - 1.6 THE VISION AND VALUES 10
- 2 PLANNING FOUNDATIONS 12**
 - 2.1 RDCK OVERVIEW AND COMMUNITY PROFILE 13
 - 2.2 POPULATION DEMOGRAPHICS 14
 - 2.3 HISTORY OF THE REGIONAL PARKS SYSTEM 15
 - 2.4 RDCK REGIONAL PARKS AND TRAILS OVERVIEW 20
 - 2.5 PROTECTED AREAS SYSTEM IN THE RDCK 22
 - 2.6 POLICY CONTEXT 30
- 3 GOALS 32**
 - 3.1 GOALS OVERVIEW 33
 - 3.2 SPECIFIC TARGETS AND ACTIONS 34

4 STRATEGIES AND ACTIONS 36

4.1 IMPROVE BALANCED (EQUITABLE) ACCESS TO REGIONAL PARKS AND TRAILS. 37

4.2 INCREASE AND ENHANCE WATER ACCESS THROUGHOUT THE REGION 38

4.3 EXPAND AND ENHANCE REGIONAL TRAIL CONNECTIVITY. 39

4.4 STRENGTHEN FOCUS ON OUTDOOR RECREATION & VISITOR EXPERIENCE. 40

4.5 PROTECT AND CONSERVE ECOLOGICALLY SIGNIFICANT LAND/AREAS 42

4.6 PLAN FOR CLIMATE CHANGE RESILIENCE AND HAZARD PREPAREDNESS. 43

4.7 RECONCILIATION 44

4.8 ADVANCE INCLUSION, EQUITY, AND ACCESSIBILITY STANDARDS 45

4.9 STEWARDSHIP, INTERPRETATION, AND ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS AND PARTNERSHIPSS. 46

4.10 DEVELOP A SIGNAGE, BRANDING, AND WAYFINDING STRATEGY (POLICY) 47

4.11 STRENGTHEN REGIONAL AND COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS 48

4.12 REVIEW SERVICE DELIVERY MODEL 49

4.13 ENHANCE REGIONAL PARKS AND TRAILS CLASSIFICATION SYSTEM. 51

4.14 STRENGTHEN OPERATIONAL CAPACITY AND ASSET MANAGEMENT. 52

4.15 MONITOR, EVALUATE, AND ADAPT 53

5 PLANNING TOOLS 54

5.1 LAND ACQUISITION PROCESS 55

5.2 ASSESSMENT CRITERIA AND SCORING FRAMEWORK 61

5.3 PARK AND TRAIL CLASSIFICATIONS 68

5.4 MANAGEMENT AND ZONING 74

5.5 MANAGEMENT PLANS 78

6 SERVICE MODEL 80

6.1 SERVICE DEFINITION 81

6.2 SERVICE PARTICIPATION AND FUNDING 83

6.3 PARTNERSHIPS AND COLLABORATIVE SERVICE DELIVERY 85

6.4 SYSTEM GOVERNANCE 86

6.5 SERVICE DELIVERY 87

6.6 SERVICE LEVELS 91

6.7 PROJECT, ASSET, AND INVESTMENT PRIORITIZATION FRAMEWORK 92

7 PERFORMANCE MEASURES (MONITORING AND REPORTING) 94

7.1 MONITORING REPORT 95

8 FRAMEWORK FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF THE STRATEGY 97

8.1 ROADMAP FOR THE NEXT 10 YEARS 98

SUPPLEMENTARY MATERIALS 105



1

INTRODUCTION

- Balfour Beach Regional Park
- Bigelow Bay Regional Park
- Bonnington Regional Park
- Brilliant Bridge Regional Park
- Cottonwood Lake Regional Park
- Crawford Creek Regional Park
- Crescent Valley Beach Regional Park
- Glacier Creek Regional Park
- Glade Regional Park
- Historic Ainsworth Wharf Regional Park
- James Johnstone Regional Park
- Krestova Regional Park
- Lardeau Regional Park
- McDonalds Landing Regional Park
- Morning Mountain Regional Park
- Nelson Salmo Great Northern Trail
- Pass Creek Regional Park
- Pulpit Rock Access Regional Trail
- Riondel Regional Park
- Robson Boat Ramp Regional Park
- Rosebery Parklands Regional Park
- Rosebery to Three Forks Regional Trail (Galena Trail)
- Rosebud Lake Regional Park
- Sunshine Bay Regional Park
- Taghum Beach Regional Park
- Waterloo Eddy Regional Park
- Winlaw Regional and Nature Park

1.1 STRATEGY PURPOSE

The Regional District of Central Kootenay (RDCK) Regional Parks and Trails are part of an extensive regional network of parks and natural spaces. This mosaic of parks, trails, and conservation lands protects environmentally sensitive areas and significant landscapes, conserves ecological biodiversity, and provides high-quality outdoor recreational opportunities for residents and visitors alike. Today, the Regional Parks and Trails system includes twenty-four Regional Parks and three Regional Trails, covering more than 648 ha and 62 km, respectively, with an additional 27km of trails located within regional parks. Additionally, the RDCK has ongoing land acquisitions and strategic partnerships that continue to grow the diverse regional park system. In 2025 two additional acquisitions were announced (along the Goat River and Robson Park), as well as the significant expansion of Rosebud Lake (in collaboration with the BC Parks Foundation).

Recognizing the high value placed on regional parks, trails, and water access in the region, the RDCK worked collaboratively with residents, partners, and other governments to develop the Regional Parks, Trails, and Water Access Strategy (PTWAS). This Strategy formalizes the RDCK's first district-wide framework for a coordinated and inclusive approach to outdoor recreation, access, and conservation.

Through a comprehensive community engagement process, the PTWAS identifies a vision for the future of regional parks, trails, and water access in the RDCK for the next ten years; which along with the established strategic priorities is intended to achieve the regions dynamic needs. Specifically, the plan offers the RDCK Regional Parks and Trails System:

- Vision and values.
- Strategic priorities and actions.
- Suite of planning and management tools.
- Monitoring and reporting guidelines.

1.2 COMMITMENT TO RECONCILIATION, RELATIONSHIPS, AND PARTNERSHIPS

As outlined in the RDCK Strategic Plan, Reconciliation is a core value of the RDCK. Regional Parks and Trails are committed to working with our Indigenous neighbours to assist in empowering community success through partnerships on projects and service delivery. The RDCK is also committed to prioritizing the active participation of Indigenous communities and volunteer organizations in decision-making processes that directly affect their lives.

Specifically Regional Parks and Trails are aligned with the following RDCK areas of focus:

- Continue on the path to Reconciliation through respectful and inclusive dialogue.
- Form long lasting, strong partnerships with Indigenous communities in support of their continued success.
- Partner with our member communities to leverage their skills in the region.
- Explore areas of common interest with our neighboring regions and align advocacy (co operate in areas of common interest).
- Develop recognition programs that celebrate our volunteers and acknowledge their dedication and time commitment



Image Source: RDCK

1.3 THE PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT PROCESS

The process of developing the PTWAS began in early 2024, with the formation of a strategic working group comprised of RDCK staff and elected officials representing the RDCK Board of Directors. Following this groups’ first initial meeting, the team developed the first round of public engagement. To inform the PTWAS, a robust engagement process was launched in June of 2024 and concluded at the end of October 2024. This process focused on residents and visitors to the RDCK, First Nations, multiple levels of governments, and many diverse community partners (e.g. accessibility/adaptive recreation, conservation, tourism, and more).

The engagement process was designed to introduce the planning process and generate insights to help inform the PTWAS. More specifically, the engagement process was designed to:

- Introduce the project and generate interest in helping inform the strategy.
- Understand the use of and satisfaction with current regional parks, trails and water access.
- Identify what is working well with the existing network of regional parks, trails and water access areas.
- Assess and define community demands, needs, and priorities of the regional parks, trails, and water access system.
- Clarify the fundamental role, purpose and goals of the RDCK Parks and Trails Service.
- Identify the most important issues and concerns that the strategy should address.
- Identify priorities/opportunities to improve the quantity, diversity, connectivity, quality, accessibility, and management of regional parks, trails and water access.

Please note that this is the draft strategy and stage 2 engagement is ongoing.

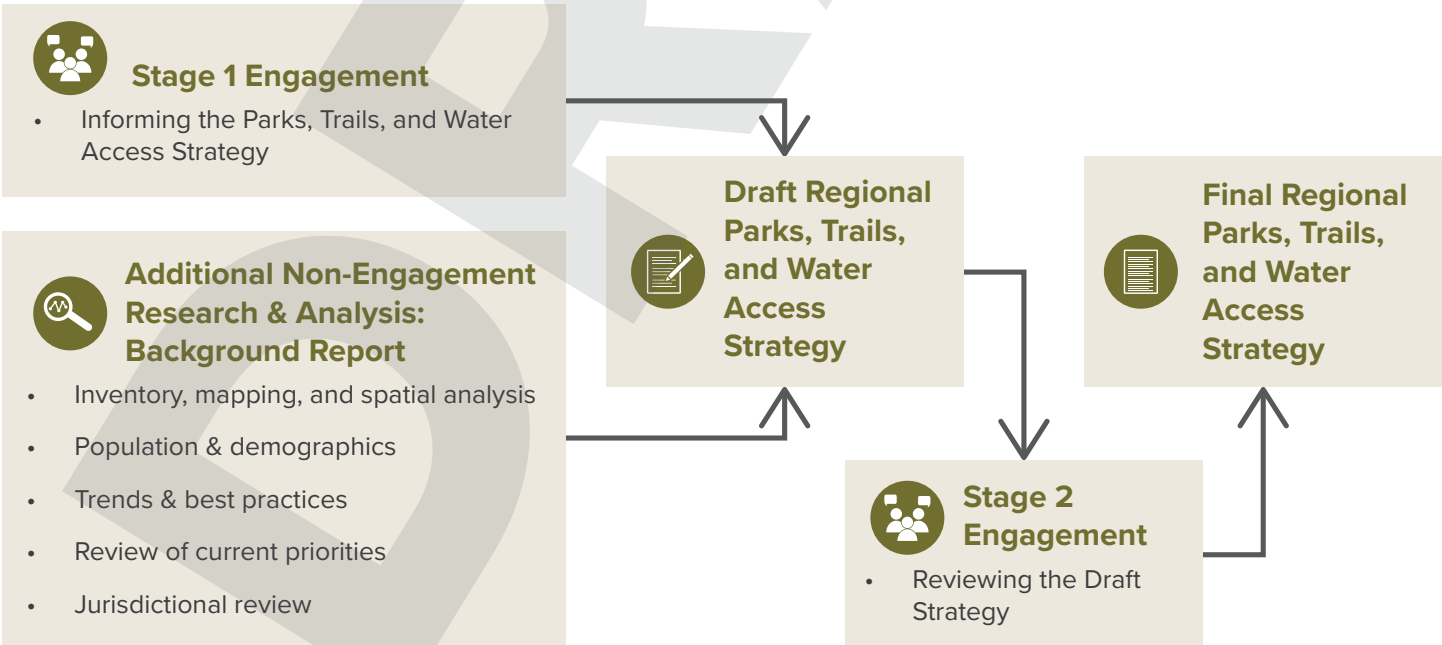


Figure 1: Regional Parks, Trails, and Water Access Strategy Process

The primary engagement tactics implemented as part of the engagement process included:



Figure 2: Primary Engagement Tactics

The engagement tactics, particularly the online survey, was designed to enable collected data to be desegregated, analysed and reported on according to diverse users, community members, non-users, interested individuals, and all others whose voices and experiences have not or may not have been captured in the past.

Engagement by the Numbers



1.3.1 Engagement outcomes: What We Heard Summary

The major themes that emerged consistently across all engagement tactics are summarized below. Please see the separate What We Heard Report for further engagement details.

- **Expand the Regional Parks and Trails System.**

Residents want equitable access to high-quality parks, trails, and water-based recreation across all communities, with strong concerns raised from underserved areas such as Creston, Areas B, C, and K.

- **Water access is a critical issue.** The engagement process documented repeated calls for new swimming areas, both motorized and non-motorized boat launches, and better awareness and communication of existing access points.

- **Recreation and conservation.** People value nature conservation alongside recreation, emphasizing that ecological protection, biodiversity, and cultural values must be balanced with increased access and development.

- **Trail connectivity and active transportation.** There is strong demand for a more connected and diverse trail network, including hiking, mountain biking, adaptive trails, equestrian use, and designated motorized routes, with trails that link communities as well as provide local recreation.

- **Universal design and recreation opportunities for all residents.** Accessibility and inclusion were emphasized, with residents seeking more facilities and opportunities that are welcoming for all ages, abilities, and cultural backgrounds.

- **Recreation infrastructure and high-quality visitor experiences.** Amenities and maintenance such as washrooms, signage, benches, parking, and garbage facilities are viewed as essential, with many respondents pointing to gaps at popular sites. Many residents also noted a lack of public awareness and branding for RDCK-managed sites, requesting better signage, communication, and trip-planning resources to improve the visitor experience and increase access.

- **Strength of community partnerships.** Participants highlighted the importance of community stewardship and volunteerism, calling for stronger partnerships, consistent funding, and support for local groups that maintain trails and parks.

- **Support for multi-use sites, but clear management directions needed.** User conflicts were identified as ongoing concerns, with requests for clear rules, designated areas, and enforcement.

First Nations engagement highlighted the need for ongoing, government-to-government relationships and potential Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs). Feedback emphasized the importance of balancing recreation with ecological and cultural values, protecting traditional and ceremonial access, and integrating Indigenous knowledge and stewardship into planning and management.

1.4 APPLICATION OF THE STRATEGY

This PTWAS is a strategic, system-level policy document designed to guide decision-making and priority setting by RDCK staff and the Board. It does not provide site-specific planning, policy, or management direction for individual parks or trails.

Recognizing that much can change over the next ten years, this strategy is intended to be a living document, meaning one that evolves in response to the shifting needs and priorities of regional residents. Additionally, some actions outlined in the PTWAS may require further planning and evaluation prior to implementation. All actions are subject to approval by the RDCK Regional Board, based on regional priorities and the resources available at the time.

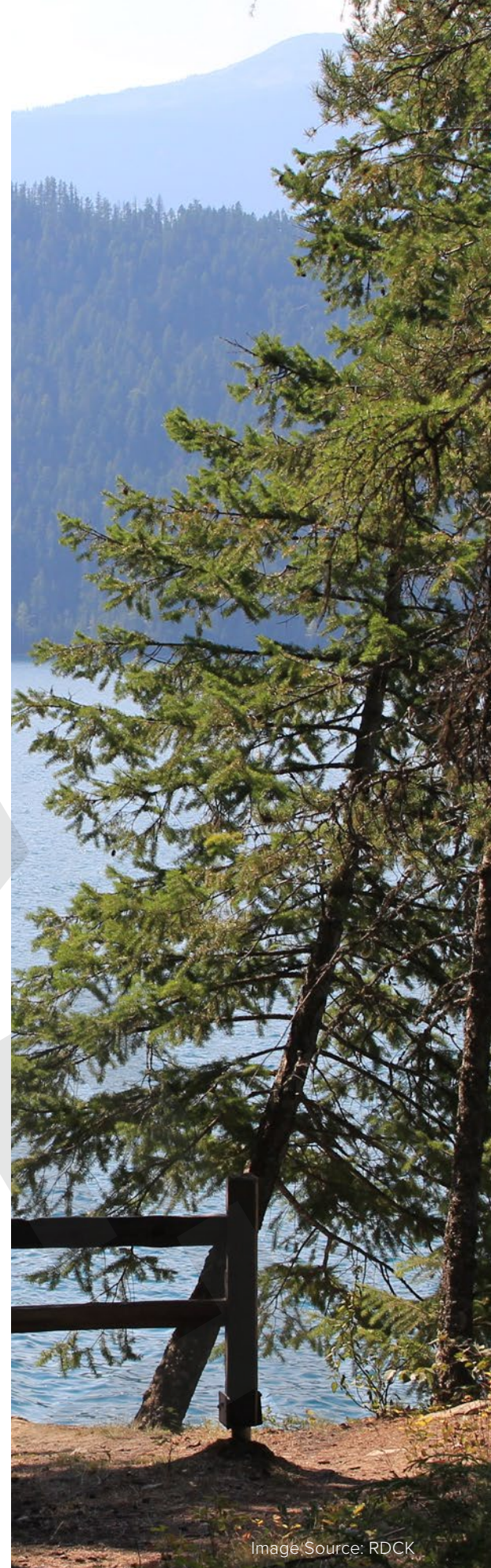


Image Source: RDCK

1.5 OPPORTUNITIES FOR SYSTEM IMPROVEMENT AND ENHANCING RESILIENCY

The background research report, technical evaluation, and public engagement process identified several opportunities to strengthen and enhance the RDCK's regional parks, trails, and water access system. These opportunities reflect the community's desire to create a more connected, inclusive, and resilient system that supports both people and the environment. While challenges exist, they also represent areas for focused investment, innovation, and partnership. This essential information and understanding of the current system have informed the strategies actions, strategies, and outcomes of this strategy.



1. Enhancing consistency in service delivery across the entire region.

- » The RDCK's sub-regional service model enables local flexibility but also results in varied levels of investment and access. While locally responsive, this model results in uneven levels of infrastructure, planning, and staffing. Improving consistency would ensure more equitable service delivery and position the system for region-wide improvements in standards and stewardship.



2. Expanding equitable access to lakes, rivers, and water-based recreation.

- » Many areas lack formalized, signed, and maintained water access points. Where access does exist, it is often informal or in ecologically sensitive locations. Residents across the RDCK emphasized the importance of safe, swimmable, and paddle-friendly shorelines. Residents would benefit from more formalized access points with appropriate amenities such as parking, signage, and washrooms. Improving these opportunities can reduce pressure on sensitive sites, increase safety, and enhance the visitor experience.



3. Strengthening regional trail connectivity and visitor experiences.

- » The RDCK is home to an extensive network of informal and formal trails, many of which offer exceptional recreational and scenic value. However, although many high-value trails exist, they are not connected into a coherent network. Trailheads may be underserved, signage inconsistent, and gaps exist between communities and major destinations. There is a clear opportunity to coordinate investments and improve experiences for both residents and visitors. Enhancing connectivity can create a more cohesive regional identity and expand recreation opportunities across seasons and user groups.



4. Improving infrastructure and visitor amenities.

- » Many regional parks and access points are valued for their natural character but lack essential infrastructure. The absence of universal design features, seating, washrooms, parking, and signage at many regional sites limits participation for seniors, families, and people with disabilities. Upgrades would directly support inclusion and comfort while also strengthening the regional identity of these spaces.



5. Expanding ecological protection and restoration initiatives.

- » There is strong community support for conservation and supporting ecological integrity across the region. Many regional park lands contain sensitive habitat, but lack formal management plans, monitoring, or restoration programs. Proactive protection of these areas will support climate resilience and long-term ecological function. Developing a region-wide ecological integrity framework and integrating restoration practices can position the RDCK as a leader in conservation-based recreation management.



6. Building staff, volunteer, and operational capacity.

- » The RDCK benefits from a strong culture of volunteerism and local stewardship. The current staff-to-asset ratio is low by comparison to other regional districts, and many programs rely on volunteers or intermittent funding. Sustainable growth of the system will require predictable staffing, support for stewardship groups, and improved coordination with partners. Expanding staff capacity, coordinating volunteer programs, and supporting community-led initiatives will be essential for sustaining and growing the regional system.



7. Creating a unified identity through signage and communication.

- » There is an identified need for improved signage, wayfinding, and public information that clearly identify RDCK regional parks and trails. Currently, the system has no unified visual identity or visitor experience framework for RDCK's regional parks and trails. This affects navigation, user expectations, and public recognition of regional services. A consistent visual identity can improve navigation, reinforce stewardship messaging, and celebrate the uniqueness of each site.

These gaps underscore the importance of collaborative action and shared investment in achieving the vision and goals of this strategy. Addressing these opportunities will require a coordinated regional framework that prioritizes inclusivity, ecological health, and equitable access. It also calls for long-term investment, shared leadership with Indigenous Nations, community organizations, and a stronger foundation for service delivery across the district.



1.6 THE VISION AND VALUES

The RDCK Parks, Trails, and Water Access Strategy is grounded in a shared vision for an inclusive, connected, and resilient outdoor system; one that reflects the landscapes, cultures, and communities of the region. The following mission, vision and values have been informed by deep community input, Indigenous perspectives, technical research, and planning best practices from across British Columbia and beyond. They are also intentionally aligned with the evolving **Community Services Department Mission and Vision**, ensuring continuity across RDCK service areas and a shared foundation for decision-making as departmental priorities continue to be refined.

Our Mission

To enable communities across the RDCK to connect, play, and thrive in nature by providing accessible, diverse, and sustainable parks, trails, and water access that protect natural and cultural assets, foster partnerships, and adapt to the evolving needs of our communities.

Our Vision

The RDCK has a vibrant and resilient system of regional parks, trails, and water access sites where people and communities connect, play, and thrive through nature. These spaces provide inclusive and accessible opportunities for recreation, foster a strong sense of belonging and connection to place, and reflect the diverse and evolving needs of the region. Through thoughtful stewardship, meaningful partnerships, and responsible service delivery, RDCK parks, trails, and water access protect cultural and ecological values while supporting community well-being and long-term environmental resilience.

Guiding Values

The strategy is underpinned by a set of shared values that guide how decisions are made, how spaces are designed and managed, and how relationships are built. Shared values help to prioritize management decisions, projects, and strategic directions.



Stewardship and Sustainability

Recognizing that the parks, trails, and waters of the RDCK are unceded territories of Indigenous Peoples and committing to their protection and stewardship for generations to come. Our approach prioritizes climate resilience, conservation, and sustainable land and water use to ensure that future generations can enjoy and benefits from these spaces.



Nature-Based Well-being

We support a diverse range of outdoor recreation opportunities that foster physical activity, mental health, cultural connection, and community pride. Our parks and trails system will celebrate the distinct identities of RDCK communities while promoting high-quality, inclusive, and sustainable nature-based experiences. Supporting recreation, celebration, and connection to place as core elements of healthy, vibrant communities.



Recreation Access For All

We strive to remove barriers and create welcoming and inclusive outdoor spaces for people of all backgrounds, abilities, and ages. We are committed to applying universal design principles where appropriate and ensuring fair geographic access across the RDCK.



Community Partnerships and Collaboration

We believe in the power of collaboration to strengthen and expand the regional parks and trails system. By working with local governments, Indigenous Nations, non-profits, and community organizations, we will leverage resources, and share expertise. Together, these efforts will create innovative partnerships that enhance recreation, conservation, and funding opportunities.



Fiscal Responsibility and Operational Excellence

We are dedicated to efficient, transparent, and sustainable management of RDCK's parks, trails, and waters. Through strategic planning, responsible funding, and innovative solutions, we will ensure the long-term financial and operational success of the regional park and trail system.

Overall, these values provide a compass for implementing the goals and actions outlined in the strategy and reflect the voices, priorities, and aspirations of people across the region.

2

PLANNING FOUNDATIONS



2.1 RDCK OVERVIEW AND COMMUNITY PROFILE

Incorporated in 1965, the RDCK is a local government that serves 62,509 residents. The Regional District is in the traditional and unceded territory of the Ktunaxa, Secwépemc, Sinixt, and Syilx Nations who have lived here since the beginning of their history on this land. The RDCK is made up of twenty-one (21) unique governance areas, including Electoral Areas, member municipalities, and Indigenous Bands. The RDCK consists of eleven (11) Electoral Areas (A, B, C, D, E, F, G, H, I, J, K) and nine (9) member municipalities, including Castlegar, Creston, Kaslo, Nakusp, Nelson, New Denver, Salmo, Silverton and Slocan.

The region is home to unique landscapes consisting of a variety of ecosystems, including lakes, rivers, creeks, beaches, and wetlands. In addition to forests and mountain environments that collectively form the heart of outdoor public recreation activities. The area is known as a diverse four-season destination with significant participation in both traditional and non-traditional park and recreation activities from both residents and visitors alike. It offers a diverse range of outdoor nature-based recreation opportunities, ranging from biking and hiking trails to outstanding cross country and downhill skiing, and much more. Overall, the landscapes create a unique culture for the area that not only shapes the social fabric of its community's but also enhances residents' quality of life.



Image Source: RDCK

2.2 POPULATION DEMOGRAPHICS

There are many unique rural communities, large and small, each with a number of distinctive social groups and varied geographic characteristics. The result is that each municipality and electoral area may have its own set of differing park values and needs. The region is experiencing modest but steady growth in several areas, driven in part by urban outmigration, remote work opportunities, and lifestyle migration trends. Much of this growth is concentrated in urban areas, and increasing population density in member municipalities influences the need for parks and trails. Between 2016 and 2021, the population of the RDCK increased by 5% to 62,515 residents. Projections anticipate the population will continue to grow to nearly 65,000 residents by 2031, and 81,845 residents by 2041 for a total of almost 40,000 households. New growth is almost entirely driven by increases in the population aged 65 and older, however projections also anticipate increases among those 25-44 years old over the next 20 years .

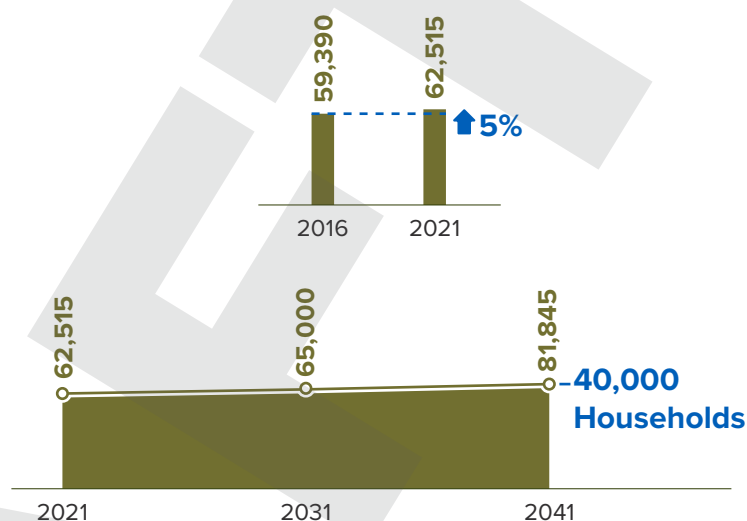


Figure 4: RDCK Population Projections

Between 2021 and 2026, seniors are expected to surpass mature adults as the largest age cohort in the RDCK. While some communities are growing, others face persistent challenges with youth retention, housing affordability, and economic diversification. The aging population (population projections) will continue to influence the region's recreational needs. While the demographics are changing, the majority of the population are engaged in nature-based recreational activities and there are overall extremely high levels of support for parks and trails across the region. Finally, while the region does have an average house income of \$91,291, there are wide income disparities. Socioeconomic diversity varies across the RDCK, and therefore, so do the needs of residents and requirements of the RDCK to provide services.

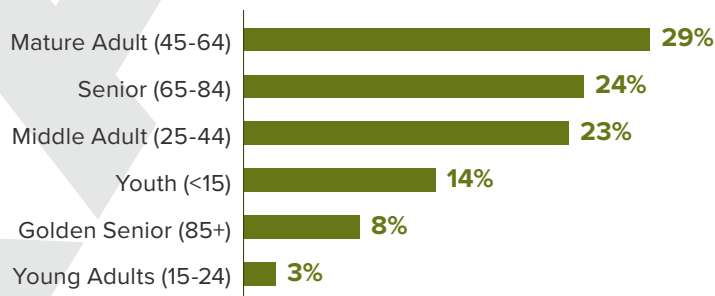


Figure 3: RDCK population by age category

2.3 HISTORY OF THE REGIONAL PARKS SYSTEM

The development of regional parks and trails within the RDCK reflects more than five decades of local commitment to public access to nature, recreation, and conservation. Beginning in 1971 with the establishment of Pass Creek Regional Park, the RDCK has since expanded its network to include twenty-four (24) regional parks and three (3) regional trails, encompassing over 648 hectares and more than 100 kilometres of trails.

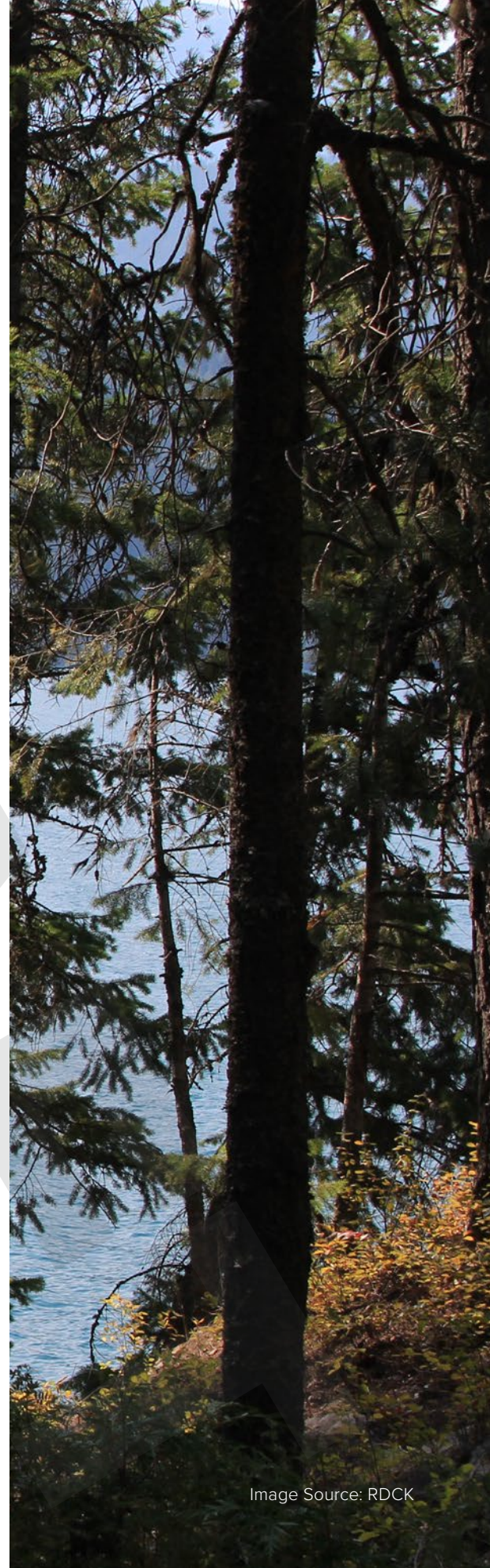


Image Source: RDCK

More than 50 years of acquiring parkland (1971-2023)

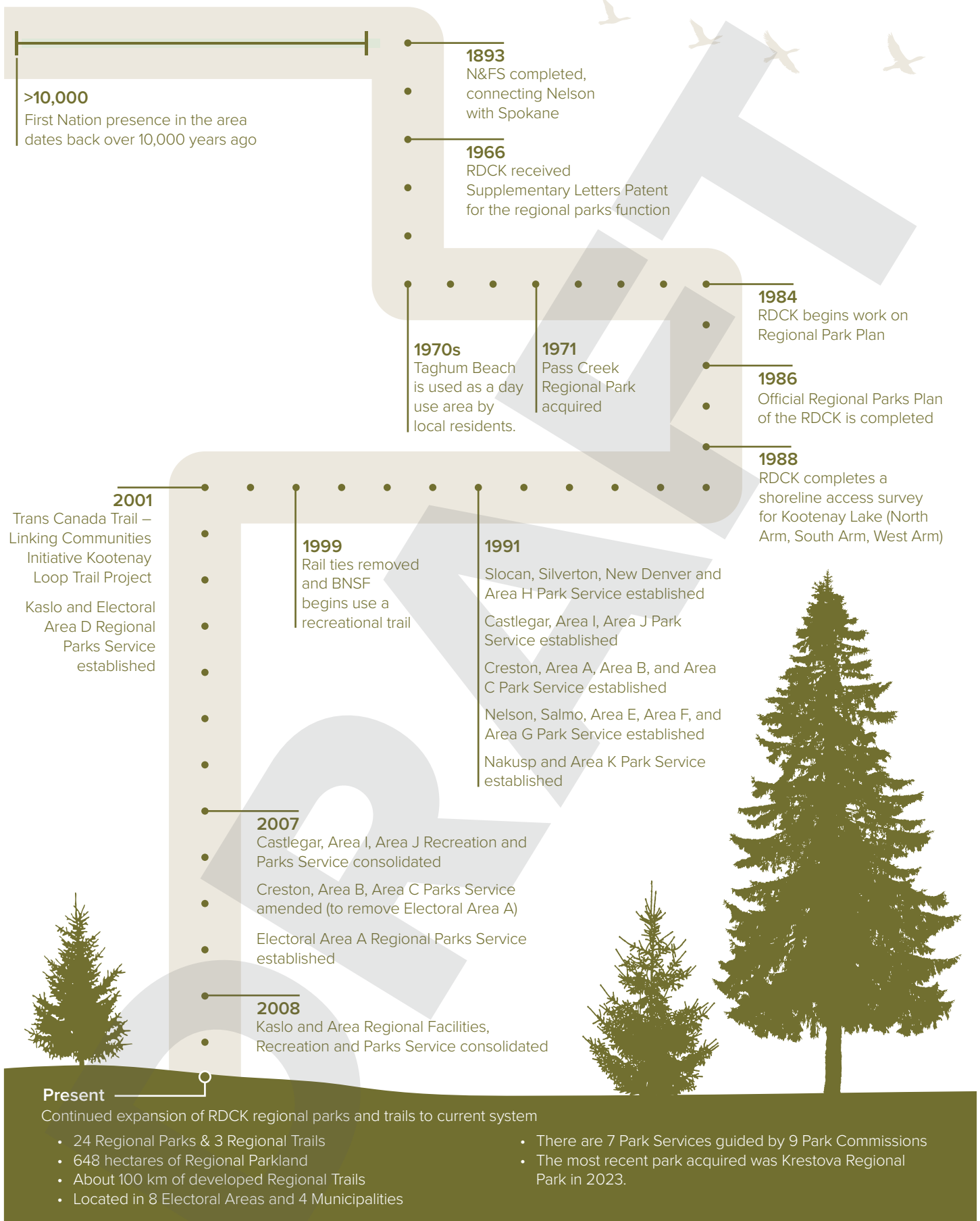


Figure 5: System history

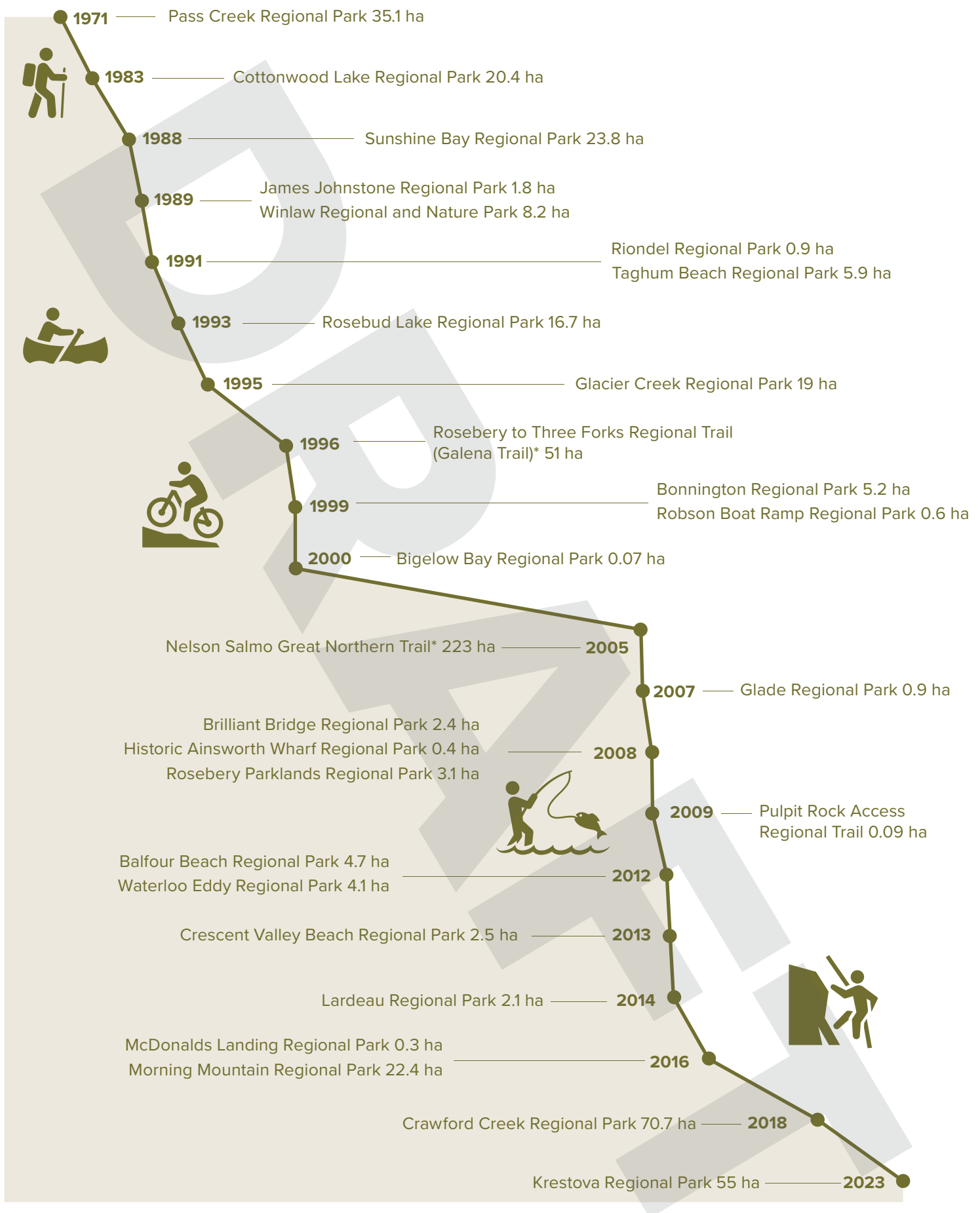


Figure 6: Timeline of parks

The evolution of this system was largely driven by site-specific needs, land donation opportunities, and community-led advocacy. Currently, this well-established system operates under a sub-regional model (as per Bylaws 2044 and 2173). This means that seven distinct park service areas, governed by separate bylaws, fund and manage their own network of parks and trails. Each of these service areas may include one or more municipalities and electoral areas that have opted into the service. While this structure was intended to respect local autonomy and distinct geographic needs, it has resulted in an uneven distribution of park assets and services across the RDCK (as highlighted in Figure 7).

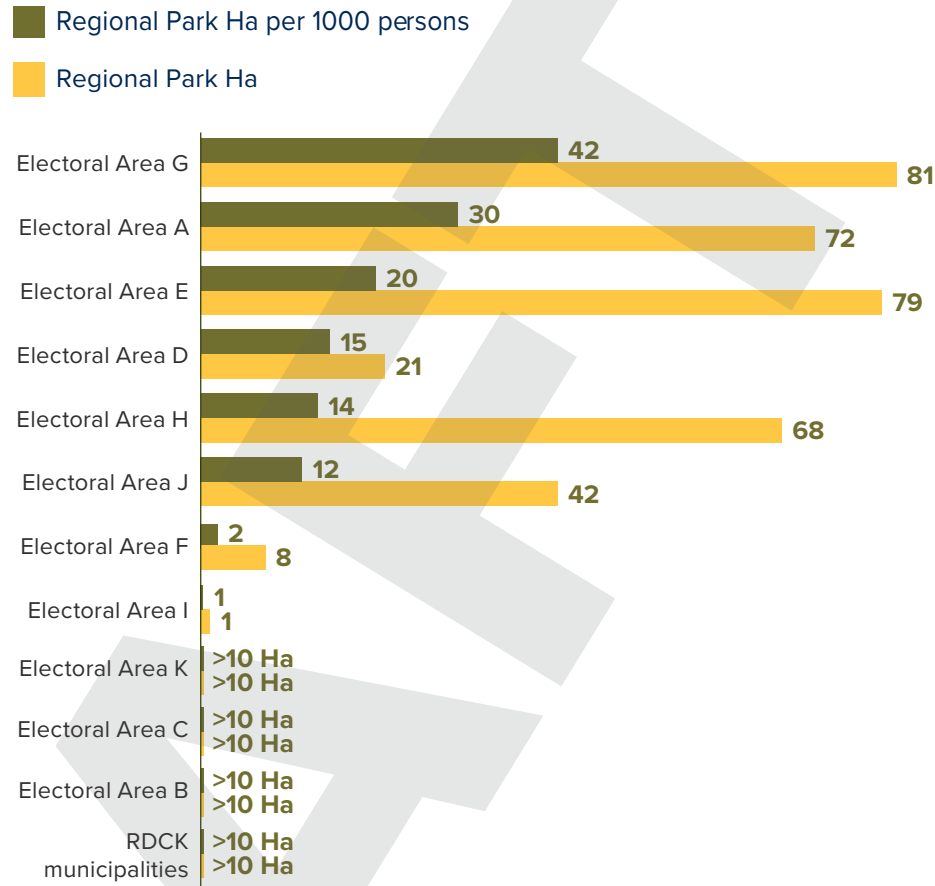


Figure 7: Regional Park Land Provisioning by Electoral Area and Municipality

Some electoral areas and municipalities have no regional parkland or trails within their boundaries, and residents in these areas may have limited access to nature-based recreation. As demand for equitable access and conservation grows, the RDCK faces important questions about the future of its funding and governance structures.

The past decade has also seen increased community interest in formalized trail networks, water access, and outdoor recreation experiences. The system has experienced growing visitation, increased demand for water and trail access, and new pressures related to climate resilience, wildfire recovery, and ecological integrity. There has also been an upsurge in community-led stewardship, Indigenous partnerships, and local government collaboration. These trends helped catalyze the development of this Regional Parks, Trails, and Water Access Strategy, the RDCK's first district-wide framework for a coordinated and inclusive approach to outdoor recreation, access, and conservation.



Image Source: RDCK



2.4 RDCK REGIONAL PARKS AND TRAILS OVERVIEW

The current RDCK Regional Parks and Trails System currently includes twenty-four (24) regional parks and three (3) regional trails covering more than 648ha and 62 km, respectively, with an additional 27km of trails located within regional parks. Additionally, the RDCK has ongoing land acquisitions and strategic partnerships that continue to grow the diverse regional park system. In 2025 two additional acquisitions were announced (along the Goat River and Robson Park), as well as the significant expansion of Rosebud Lake (in collaboration with the BC Parks Foundation). These parks and trails vary in size, setting, and level of development. The system spans a diverse range of natural landscapes, historic transportation corridors, and high-use recreation sites. A variety of governance models and partnerships are used to manage these lands, reflecting the sub-regional service delivery structure. In addition, the RDCK is constantly evaluating lands and cultural sites of significance; in 2025 and into 2026 there have been multiple land acquisitions that will enhance the current system. Future park sites provide regional parks in areas previously without any RDCK regional parks and trails. As the system evolves so too will the needs of the service delivery, this strategy is grounded in the realities of today while looking to the needs of the future.

Figure 8: RDCK Regional Park System Overview

LEGEND

- Regional District of Central Kootenay (RDCK) Boundary
- First Nation Boundaries
- Municipal Boundaries
- Ecological Reserve
- Provincial Park
- Waterbody
- Regional Park
- Future Park Site
- Regional Trail
- Trails
- Highway

- | | |
|----|--|
| 1 | Balfour Beach Regional Park |
| 2 | Bigelow Bay Regional Park |
| 3 | Bonnington Regional Park |
| 4 | Brilliant Bridge Regional Park |
| 5 | Cottonwood Lake Regional Park |
| 6 | Crawford Creek Regional Park |
| 7 | Crescent Valley Beach Regional Park |
| 8 | Glacier Creek Regional Park |
| 9 | Glade Regional Park |
| 10 | Historic Ainsworth Wharf Regional Park |
| 11 | James Johnstone Regional Park |
| 12 | Krestova Regional Park |
| 13 | Lardeau Regional Par |
| 14 | McDonalds Landing Regional Park |
| 15 | Morning Mountain Regional Park |
| 16 | Pass Creek Regional Park |
| 17 | Riondel Regional Park |
| 18 | Robson Boat Ramp Regional Park |
| 19 | Rosebery Parklands Regional Park |
| 20 | Rosebud Lake Regional Park |
| 21 | Sunshine Bay Regional Park |
| 22 | Taghum Beach Regional Park |
| 23 | Waterloo Eddy Regional Park |
| 24 | Winlaw Regional and Nature Park |
| 25 | Nelson Salmo Great Northern Trail |
| 26 | Pulpit Rock Access Regional Park |
| 27 | Rosebery to Threeforks Regional Trail |
| A | 3823 Goat Canyon Road |
| B | Campbell Fields |
| C | Former Old School House Site |
| D | Robson Community Park |

Regional parks and trails are distinct from community parks in that they are intended to serve a broader regional population, offer unique ecological or recreational value, or support cross-boundary connections. Many regional assets have been acquired through community advocacy, legacy planning, or land use agreements with private landowners or other agencies. Figure 8 provides an overview of the RDCK project area, including its regional parks, trails, waterbodies and more.

2.5 PROTECTED AREAS SYSTEM IN THE RDCK

Central to this Strategy is the opportunity to serve the needs of residents with a diversity of regional recreational opportunities that are not being provided by any other agency. As such, it is important to note that regional parks are part of a larger system of Indigenous, federal, provincial, municipal, and private land parks and protected areas in the region (Figure 9).



Figure 9: Park Types Continuum in the RDCK

The Regional Parks and Trails System is just one of multiple park systems in the region, yet it is integral to communities and residents across the RDCK. While the regional parks and trails only represent about 1% of the total parks and protected areas in the region, these sites are intended to be accessible and serve as the primary destination for nature-based outdoor recreation for residents. Conservation, protection of natural and cultural heritage, and outdoor recreation opportunities are also available across the region within the:

- 19 Provincial Parks
- 33 Provincial Parks and Ecological Reserves
- 181 Provincial Recreation Sites
- 75 Municipal Parks
- More than 25 other conservation sites
- Additional 2,678km of trails in the region (managed by other agencies and private and non-profit organizations)¹

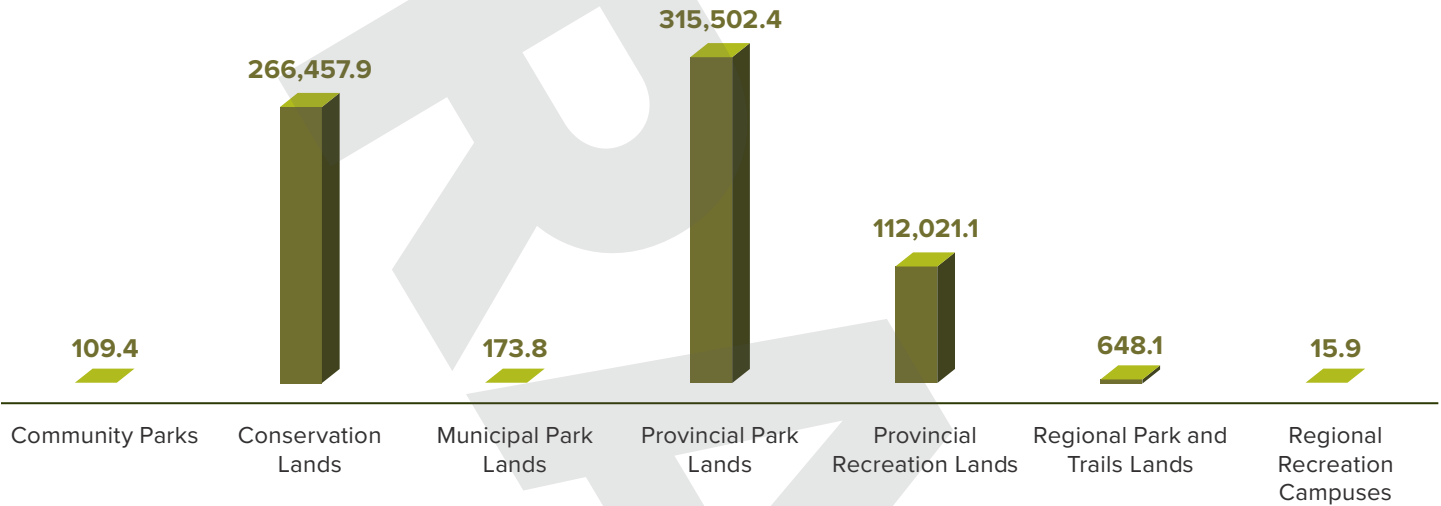


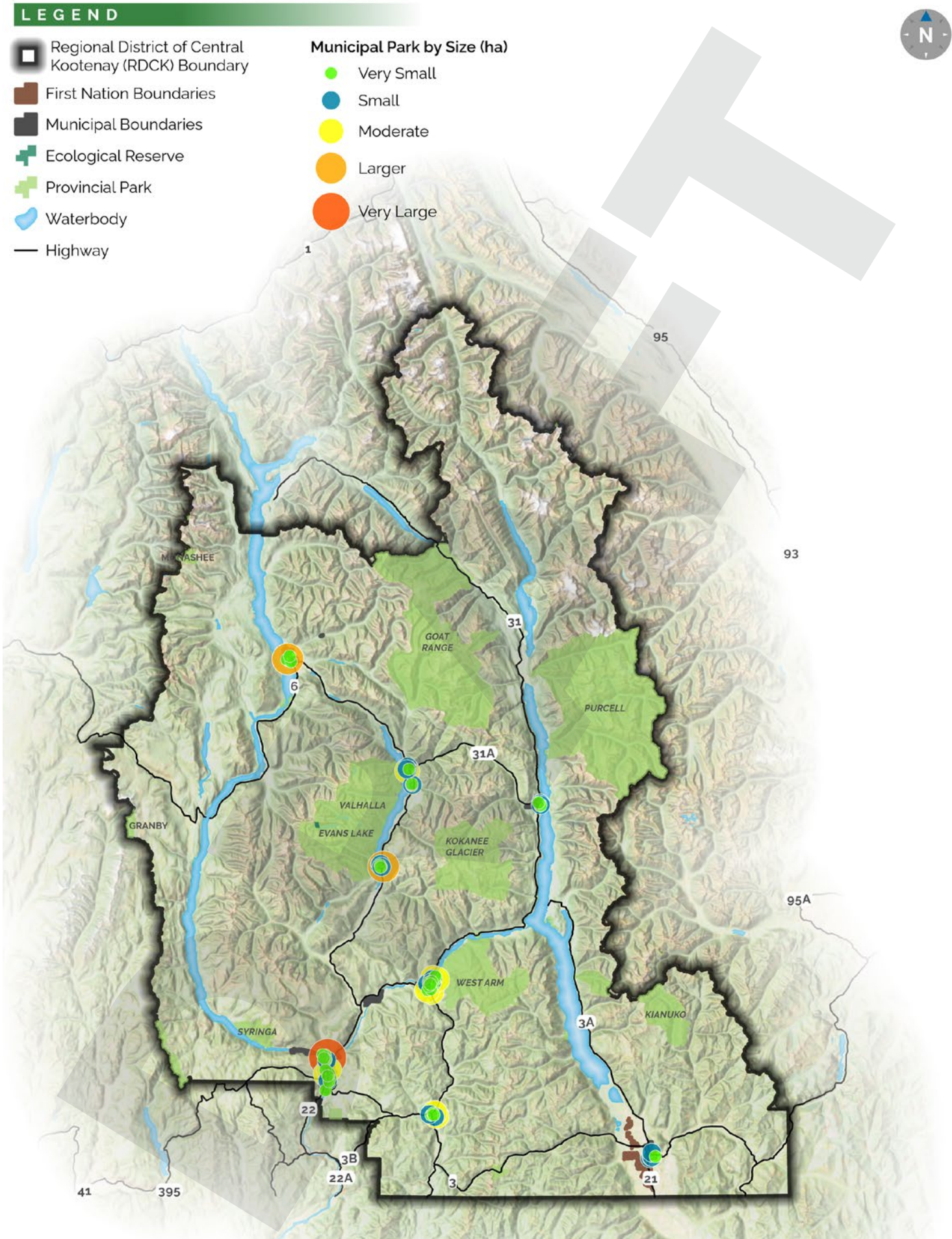
Figure 10: Hectares of Park and Conservation Lands in the RDCK

1 This includes sanctioned and unsanctioned trails (decommission Forest Service Roads, unauthorized trail building, etc.) and is based on available data from the RDCK and third-party sources (e.g. Trailforks, OSM, Strava Metro).

Provincial parks, recreation areas and conservation lands provide protection and access to unique natural and cultural landscapes across the RDCK. These protected areas serve different mandates and priorities, such as:

- **Ecological Reserves:** Have the primary purpose of ecosystem conservation and preservation of natural features, plants, and wildlife.
 - **Provincial Recreation Sites:** Provide the public with safe and high-quality recreational opportunities.
- Other important natural areas in the region are protected and managed by non-governmental organizations such as the Nature Conservancy of Canada, Ducks Unlimited, and conservation organizations such as the Kootenay Conservation Program. Within these areas biodiversity is prioritized, often ensuring that sensitive ecosystems and at-risk species are protected at the expense of public access.

Figure 11: Municipal Parks in the RDCK



Municipal and Community Parks

Municipal and community parks also serve the residents of the RDCK and contribute to a system of connected green spaces and trails. Currently, no national guidelines exist for the amount of parkland needed per 1000 residents. However, the general guideline for park space provision is typically about 4 to 6 hectares per 1,000 residents. This can vary based on local government standards, community needs, geographic conditions, and city planning priorities.

Some cities aim for higher ratios, especially if they emphasize outdoor recreation or have ample land available, while denser urban areas may have less space and aim for innovative approaches to maximize green areas. Table 1 summarizes the approximate municipal parkland base by the municipality.

Table 1: municipal parkland by municipality

MUNICIPALITY	# OF MUNICIPAL PARKS (APPROX)	MUNICIPALITY AREA IN HECTARES	PARK % OF MUNICIPAL LAND BASE	POP. 2021	TOTAL PARK PROVIDED IN HECTARES	PARK PROVIDED # HA /1000 POP.)	PARK REQUIRED (4 HA /1000 POP.)*	DEFECIT (-) IN HECTARES	SURPLUS (+) IN HECTARES
Castlegar	16	1474	3.1	8,485	61.12	5.04	36.1		9.4
Creston	16	609	1.5	5,506	31.38	1.72	20.9	11.9	
Kaslo	6	301	1.6	786	4.9	0.93	3.9		1.0
Nakusp	5	120	1.4	1,904	17.1	15.13	4.5		12.6
Nelson	17	687	6.4	11,074	43.9	4.12	42.7		1.2
Salmo	5	244	6.7	768	15.93	14.28	4.6		11.7
New Denver	5	87	1.4	487	11.9	25.15	1.9		10
Silverton	8	35	11.4	391	18.72	20.51	0.8		3.2
Slocan	6	78	26.0	299	20.3	74.63	1.1		19.2
TOTAL	78	-	1.5 to 26	29700	220.35	-	116.5	SURPLUS	56.4

Note these numbers are approximate/estimates of the #of parks per municipality as each area has evolving and differing methods of asset management and recording.



2.5.1 Ecological Significance

The RDCK is ecologically significant due to its diverse landscapes, which encompass multiple biogeoclimatic zones, including:

- Interior Cedar-Hemlock.
- Montane Spruce.
- Engelmann Spruce-Subalpine Fir.

These zones host unique ecosystems and species adapted to the distinct environmental conditions and topography of RDCK, from valleys to alpine areas, the region supports a wide range of flora and fauna, making it a biodiversity hotspot (Figure 11).

Common Threats to Conservation Values

- Residential & commercial development
 - » Tree cutting
 - » Fragmentation
 - » Groundwater alteration
- Climate change
 - » Drought
 - » Wildfire
 - » Heavy rainfall events
- Invasive Species
- Species Disturbance & Mortality
- Natural System Modification

Figure 12: Environmental Density Evaluation

LEGEND

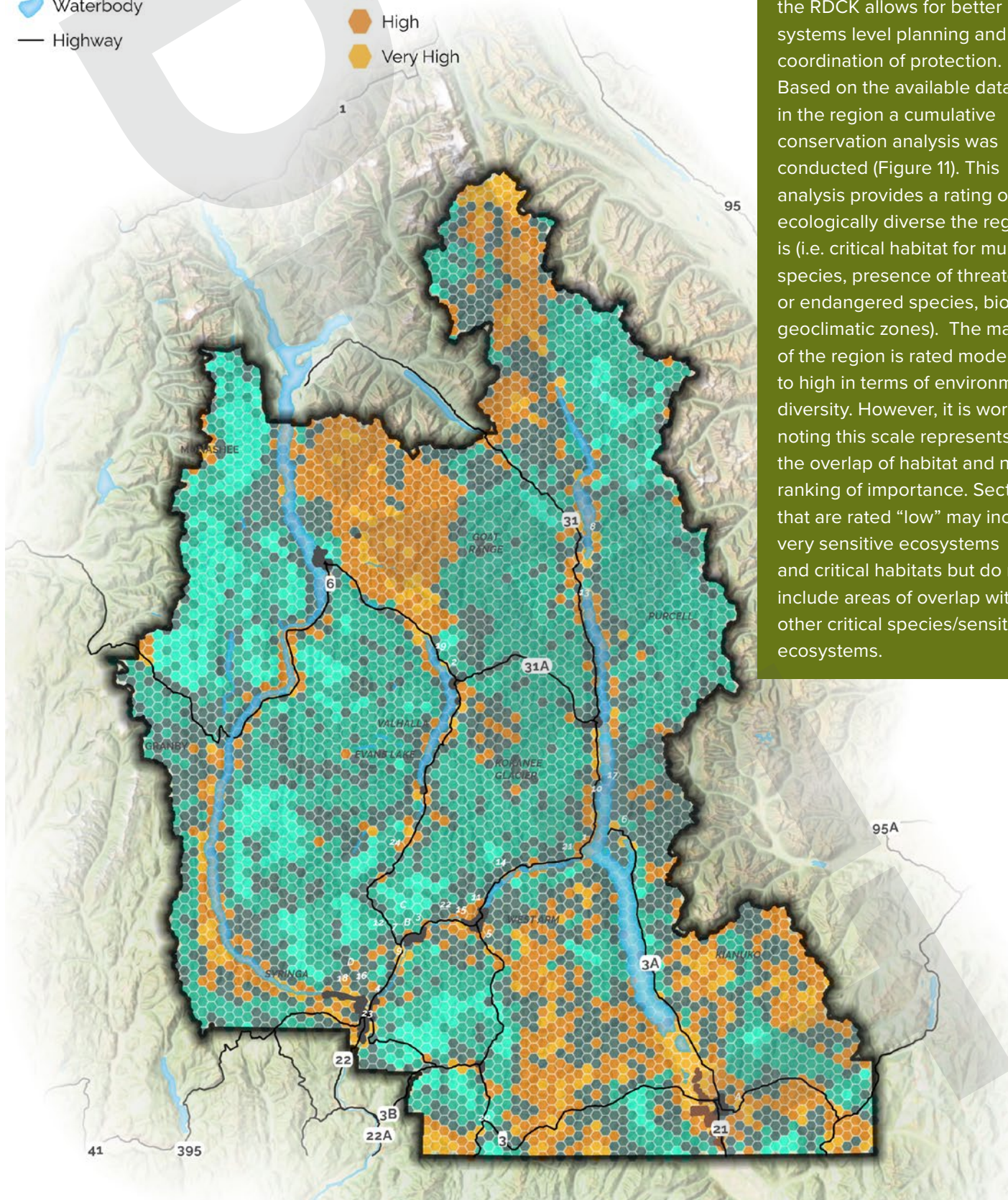
-  Regional District of Central Kootenay (RDCK) Boundary
-  First Nation Boundaries
-  Municipal Boundaries
-  Waterbody
-  Highway

Environmental Diversity Score:

-  Very Low
-  Low
-  Moderate
-  High
-  Very High



Understanding the significance of conservation values across the RDCK allows for better systems level planning and coordination of protection. Based on the available data in the region a cumulative conservation analysis was conducted (Figure 11). This analysis provides a rating of how ecologically diverse the region is (i.e. critical habitat for multiple species, presence of threatened or endangered species, bio geoclimatic zones). The majority of the region is rated moderate to high in terms of environmental diversity. However, it is worth noting this scale represents the overlap of habitat and not a ranking of importance. Sections that are rated “low” may include very sensitive ecosystems and critical habitats but do not include areas of overlap with other critical species/sensitive ecosystems.



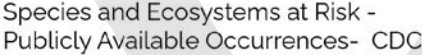


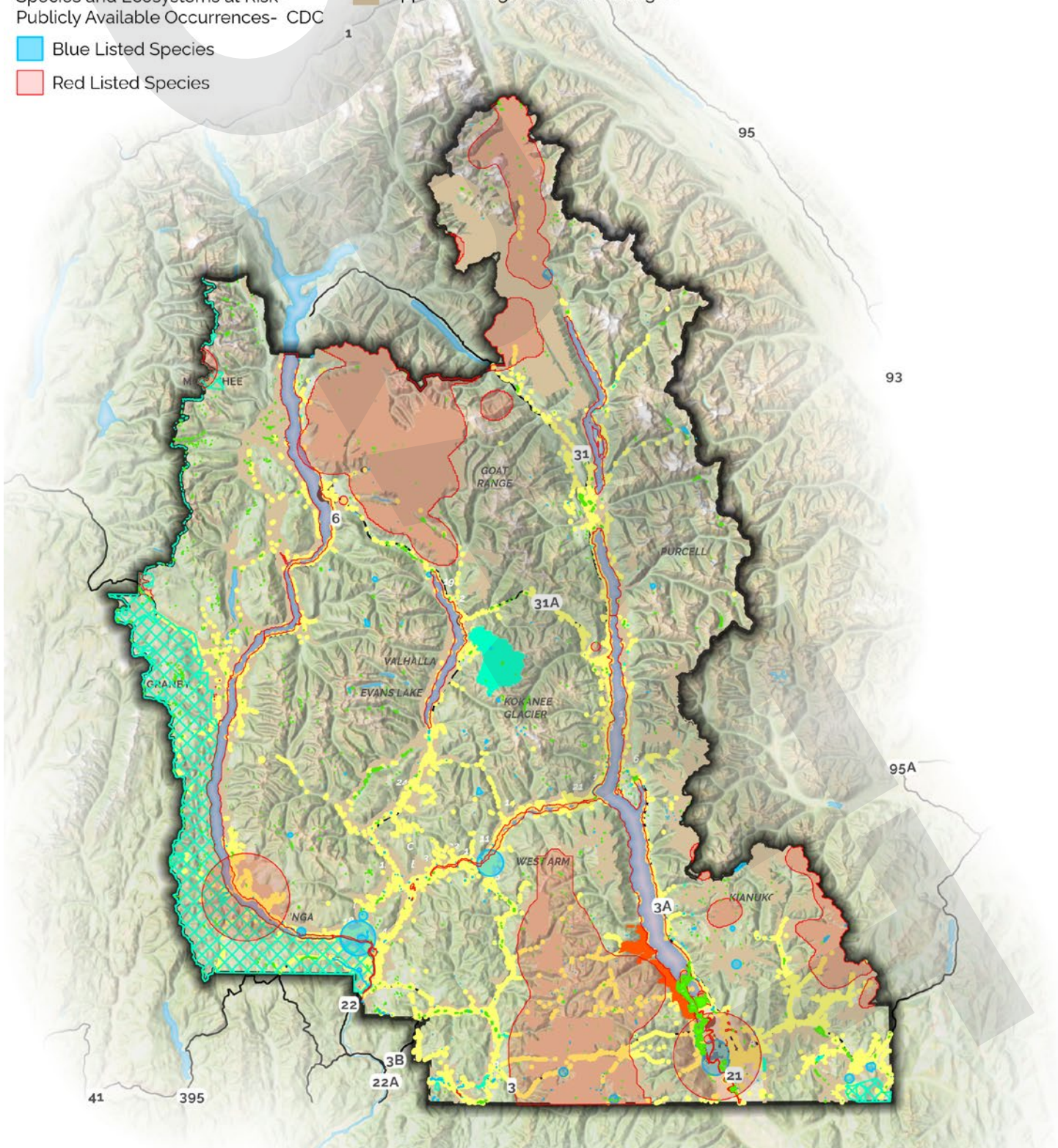
The RDCK also contains critical habitats for species at risk (Figure 12), such as Grizzly Bears, Western Screech-Owls, Mountain Caribou, and The American Badger. These species rely on expansive landscapes, intact forests, grasslands and open forests, which are increasingly threatened by urban development and road mortality. Additionally, The Northern Leopard Frog, once widespread across Western Canada, is now restricted to a few locations, with RDCK's wetlands providing vital habitat. Wetland degradation and invasive species have contributed to its drastic decline. Whitebark Pine is also a key species at risk in the RDCK. This high-elevation tree species is essential for watershed stability and provides food for wildlife, such as Clark's Nutcracker and Grizzly Bears. However, it faces threats from white pine blister rust, climate change, and habitat loss, leading to its designation as endangered under Canada's Species at Risk Act (SARA). Conservation initiatives in the area emphasize preserving old-growth forests, riparian zones, and wetland areas like the Columbia River Wetlands, one of North America's most significant wetland ecosystems, which provides essential habitat for migratory birds and aquatic species. A significant portion of the region is listed as "red" (492,531 ha), suggesting that much of the land base in the RDCK is important habitat for threatened, endangered, or species at risk.

Image Source: RDCK

Figure 13: RDCK Critical Habitats and Species at Risk

LEGEND

-  Regional District of Central Kootenay (RDCK) Boundary
-  First Nation Boundaries
-  Municipal Boundaries
-  Waterbody
-  Highway
-  Wetlands (Freshwater Atlas)
-  Darkwoods Sensitive Ecosystems Inventory (SEI) Project Boundary
-  Wildlife Habitat Area - Approved
-  Wildlife Habitat Area- Proposed
-  Invasive Plant Sites
-  Approved Ungulate Winter Ranges
- 
-  Blue Listed Species
-  Red Listed Species



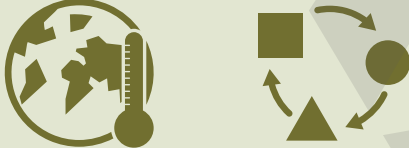
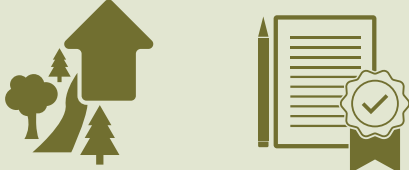
2.6 POLICY CONTEXT

As illustrated in Figure 13, regional parks and trails can help to achieve the priorities of broader provincial and national policies and strategies. The Regional Parks and Trails System also helps to support, or directly deliver, on the priorities set in regional and local government plans and policies.

National • Truth & Reconciliation Commission Calls to Action (2015) • Canada's 2030 Nature Strategy • Parks for All (2017) • Framework for Recreation in Canada (2015, updated 2024) • Canada's National Active Transportation Strategy (2021) • A Healthy Environment and a Healthy Economy (2020) • One with Nature: A Renewed Approach to Land and Freshwater Conservation in Canada (2018) • The Price of Inactivity: Measuring the Powerful Impact of Sport, Physical Activity, and Recreation in Canada (2023) • Canada's 2030 Nature Strategy: Halting and Reversing Biodiversity Loss in Canada (2024)	Provincial • Trails Strategy for British Columbia (2013) • Authorizing Recreational Mountain Bike Trails on Provincial Crown Land Operational Policy (2013) • British Columbia's Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act (2019) • Clean BC. Our Nature. Our Power. Our Future. Roadmap to 2030 (2020) • Accessible BC: B.C.'s Accessibility Plan (& Accessible British Columbia Act (2021)) • Outdoor Recreation Council of British Columbia Strategic Plan (2021-2025) • BC Parks Commitment to Inclusion (2023)
Regional • RDCK User Fees and Charges for Publicly Provided Parks and Recreation Services (2019) • Park Use Permit Guidelines (2019) • RDCK Strategic Plan 2024-2026 (2024) • Parkland Dedication Policy (2024) • All relevant Bylaws	Sub-Regional • Regional District of Central Kootenay – Nelson and District Parks and Recreation Master Plan (2012) • Regional District of Central Kootenay: Castlegar and Areas I & J Recreation & Culture Master Plan (2016) • Regional District of Central Kootenay: Area H & the Villages of Slocan, Silverton, and New Denver Recreation Master Plan (2016) • Regional District of Central Kootenay – Town of Creston and Electoral Areas A, B & C State of Parks and Recreation Report (2020) • Regional District of Central Kootenay – Town of Creston and Electoral Areas A, B & C Parks and Recreation Master Plan (2020) • All Municipal & Electoral Area Official Community Plans

Figure 14: Relevant Policy, Strategy & Plan Context

As guided by these policies and strategies, regional parks and trails should be planned, developed and managed to:

	Provide a diversity of nature-based recreation experiences, for all ages and abilities, that allow people to connect to nature and be more physically active more often. Ensure equitable, geographically balanced access to high-quality outdoor recreation opportunities, particularly nature-based and water-based activities that are not otherwise offered by other levels of government.
	Advance reconciliation and inclusion by integrating Indigenous knowledge, values, and cultural practices into park planning and management, supporting opportunities for co-management, and promoting cultural awareness through education and interpretation.
	Conserve the region's biodiversity, species at risk and environmentally sensitive areas while helping to deliver on international commitments to protect 30% of Canada's land and water by 2030.
	Strengthen the region's resilience and ability to adapt to climate change.
	Support connected and sustainable communities by developing integrated trail networks, ensuring parks and trails align with Official Community Plans, and linking recreation with broader goals for transportation, growth management, and climate resilience.
	Ensure fair and transparent use of parks and facilities through policies that regulate activities, guide partnerships, and establish fee structures that reflect shared and individual benefits.
	Foster collaboration and partnerships across governments, First Nations, community groups, and local organizations to strengthen stewardship, programming, and resource management.
	Recognize that long-term sustainability may require difficult decisions regarding reinvestment, repurposing, relocation, or decommissioning of assets that are no longer viable, safe, or aligned with the goals of the regional parks system.

An aerial photograph of a winter landscape. In the foreground, a dense forest of evergreen trees is covered in a thick layer of snow. To the left, a large, open area shows rows of young trees planted in a grid pattern. A winding river flows through the middle ground, its banks also covered in snow. In the background, more forested hills and distant mountains are visible under a cloudy sky. A large, white number '3' is overlaid on the upper left portion of the image.

3

GOALS

3.1 GOALS OVERVIEW



**Provide Outstanding
Nature-Based Recreation
Opportunities**



**Enhance Access to Regional
Parks and Trails**



**Advance Inclusion, Equity, and
Welcoming Experiences Across
Regional Parks and Trails**



**Protect and Steward
Regionally Significant Natural
and Cultural Areas**



**Strengthen Community and
Regional Partnerships**



**Ensure Operational Excellence
and Fiscal Responsibility**

3.2 SPECIFIC TARGETS AND ACTIONS

Table 2: SPECIFIC TARGETS AND ACTIONS

Goal	Targets and Actions
Provide Outstanding Nature-Based Recreation Opportunities 	• Maintain and enhance the wide range of outdoor recreational options, including nature-based, water-based, and multi-use activities. • Maintain and enhance spaces and programs that encourage physical activity, mental health, well-being, and connection to nature. • Support appropriate visitor use to protect natural resources and ensure safe, high-quality recreation experiences.
Enhance Access to Regional Parks and Trails 	• Strengthen the interconnected networks of parks and trails that link people, communities, and natural areas to all areas of the RDCK. • Prioritize development of new regional parks and trails in communities currently lacking regional parks and trails. • Prioritize regional trails and greenways to improve recreational and ecological corridors. • Continue to focus on water access in RDCK regional parks and trails (where appropriate and possible).
Advance Inclusion, Equity, and Welcoming Experiences Across Regional Parks and Trails 	• Establish system-wide standards and design guidelines that define how inclusion, accessibility, and equity will be incorporated across different park and trail types. Collaborate with community-based organizations to ensure guidelines meet the needs of community members and feasibility across the system. • Review current parks to ensure that the system of RDCK regional parks and trails provides inclusive and accessible nature-based recreation opportunities. • Future regional parks and trails will be planned and designed to offer a range of experiences that reflect the region's geographic, cultural, and recreational diversity. Ensuring that people of all ages, abilities, and interests can connect with and be active in nature in ways that are meaningful to them.
Protect and Steward Regionally Significant Natural and Cultural Areas 	• Safeguard ecosystems, biodiversity, and culturally significant areas through conservation planning, climate-resilient design, ecological sensitivity mapping, and Indigenous-led stewardship practices. • Ecological protection and climate resilience may require changes to recreation access, infrastructure, and service delivery, including rerouting, seasonal closures, restoration, or decommissioning where appropriate. • Participation in initiatives such as the Municipal Protected Areas Project to support the long-term recognition and protection of ecologically and culturally important lands within the RDCK parks and trails system. • Collaborate with Indigenous communities to integrate traditional ecological knowledge and advance reconciliation. • Promote public education on sustainability, biodiversity, and responsible recreation.

Goal	Targets and Actions
Strengthen Community and Regional Partnerships 	• Continue to foster ongoing collaborative relationships with Indigenous groups, local governments, and community organizations. • Develop new meaningful relationships and collaborative partnership opportunities. • Partner with stakeholders to expand resources, enhance recreational opportunities, and align regional initiatives.
Ensure Operational Excellence and Fiscal Responsibility 	• Develop a clear classification system for regional parks, trails, and water access areas that supports efficient and effective management. • Ongoing investment in asset management to ensure operation and maintenance capacity. • Prioritize sustainable funding models and innovation to support long-term operational success.

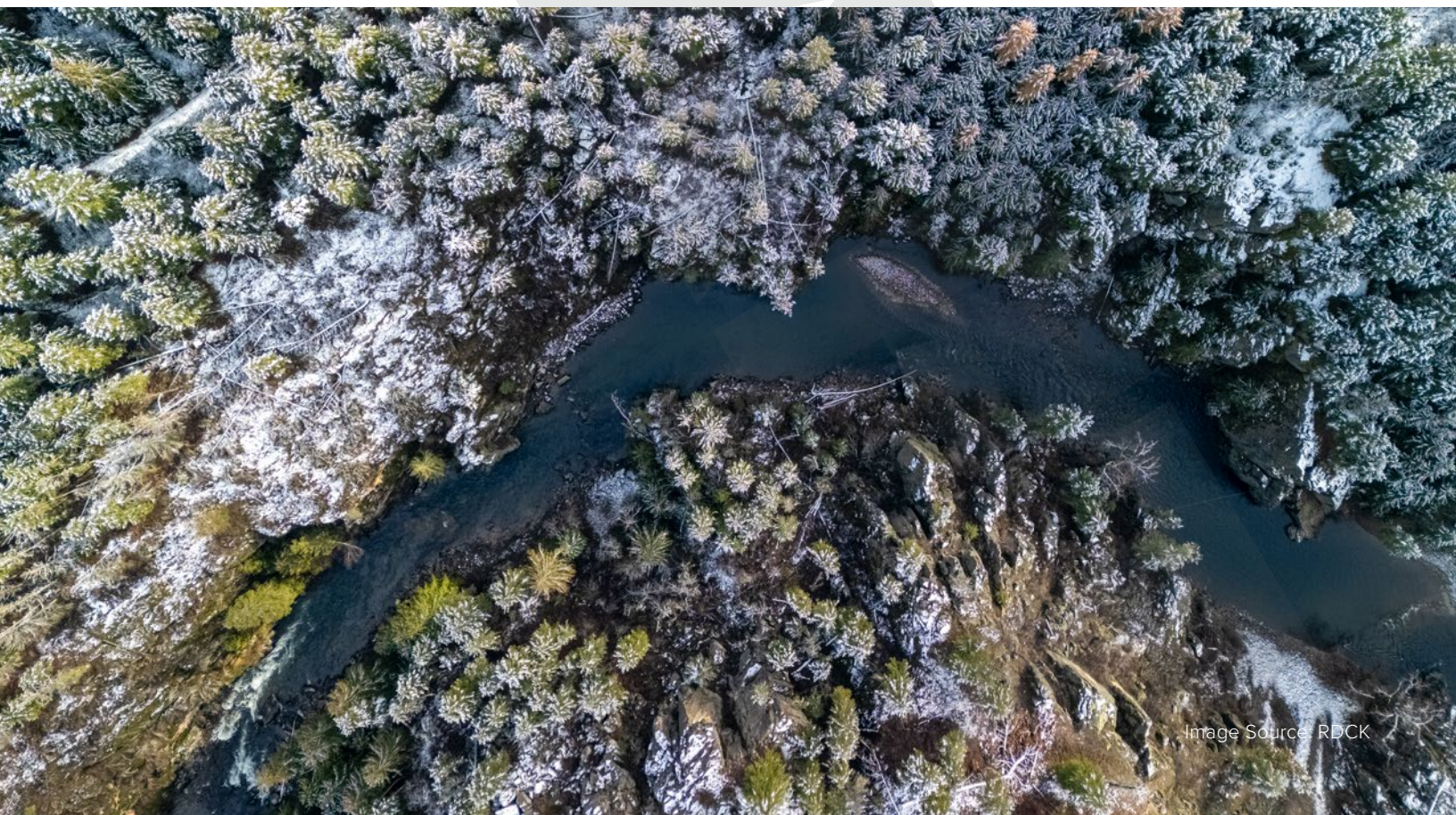


Image Source: RDCK

4

STRATEGIES AND ACTIONS

4.1 IMPROVE BALANCED (EQUITABLE) ACCESS TO REGIONAL PARKS AND TRAILS

Goals Supported



Outstanding
Recreation



Enhance
Access



Advance
Inclusion



Protect
and Steward



Strengthen
Community



Operational
Excellence

Not all areas in the RDCK have equal access to regional park and trail opportunities, creating service gaps that limit the benefits of the system for some communities. Addressing these imbalances is essential for equity, inclusion, and community well-being ensuring that all residents benefit from the health, recreation, and environmental values of the regional system.

4.1.1 Following the approval of the PTWAS, formally adopt the Land Acquisition Process identified in this strategy.

4.1.2 Establish a dedicated RDCK Land Acquisition Fund with annual contributions to build capacity for timely purchases or agreements.

4.1.3 Implement the land acquisition strategy to close geographic and service gaps of Electoral Areas and communities with little or no access to regional parks, trails, or water access, focusing on high-priority ecological areas, regional recreation nodes, and key connectivity corridors.

4.1.4 Partner with communities, First Nations, local governments, and utilize RDCK staff technical knowledge to co-create new regional assets that reflect local needs and values.

4.1.5 Engage the public in fundraising, awareness campaigns, and/or stewardship initiatives to support acquisition projects (when appropriate).

4.1.6 Review and update Land Acquisition Process and key information every five years (and as needed) to be adaptive to a changing region.

4.1.7 Monitor and report progress toward achieving equitable distribution of regional park and trail access across the RDCK.

4.2 INCREASE AND ENHANCE WATER ACCESS THROUGHOUT THE REGION

Goals Supported



**Outstanding
Recreation**



**Enhance
Access**



**Advance
Inclusion**



**Protect
and Steward**



**Strengthen
Community**



**Operational
Excellence**

Water-based recreation is central to the RDCK lifestyle, yet access varies significantly across the region. The strategy emphasizes the need for safe, inclusive, and environmentally responsible access to lakes and rivers for all residents. A comprehensive RDCK Water Access Strategy will be developed to guide future investments, supported by a full mapping and inventory exercise of all formal and informal water access points. This work will help prioritize improvements, guide acquisitions, and ensure facilities are maintained to high safety and environmental standards.

4.2.1 Complete a region-wide mapping and inventory of all water access points, including boat launches, swimming areas, and informal shoreline access.

4.2.2 Develop and adopt an RDCK Water Access Strategy to guide future planning, investment, and stewardship.

4.2.3 Continue to monitor and maintain RDCK managed boat launches, swimming areas, and shoreline access points for safety, accessibility, and environmental protection.

4.2.4 Establish shoreline stewardship partnerships to monitor and maintain water access sites to support RDCK system.

4.2.5 Promote safe and responsible water use through signage, education programs, and seasonal outreach

4.3 EXPAND AND ENHANCE REGIONAL TRAIL CONNECTIVITY

Goals Supported



**Outstanding
Recreation**



**Enhance
Access**



**Advance
Inclusion**



**Protect
and Steward**



**Strengthen
Community**



**Operational
Excellence**

The RDCK has an extensive but fragmented trail network, with many high-value recreation and active transportation routes lacking continuous connections or linkages to communities, regional parks, and key destinations. Engagement findings highlight strong public demand for a coordinated, high-quality regional trail system that integrates recreation, tourism, and alternative transportation opportunities. Within the RDCK Recreation Master Plan is a call for the development of a Regional Trails Strategy, recognizing trails as vital connectors for both residents and visitors alike. While this strategy acts as the guiding document for regional parks and trails, there is value in a detailed, map-based companion plan to this Strategy, that will guide trail development, connectivity improvements, and tourism-focused enhancements. This framework will provide a comprehensive inventory of existing trails, identify priority corridors and gaps, and align trail development with both recreation and active transportation objectives.

This strategy focuses on closing critical gaps, improving trailheads and wayfinding, and ensuring that regional trails are safe, accessible, and environmentally sustainable. It also emphasizes working with municipalities, First Nations, and provincial agencies to coordinate planning, align standards, and leverage funding. A formal Regional Trails Strategy will guide these investments, identify priority corridors, and integrate trail development with broader recreation and land use planning efforts.

4.3.1 Develop and adopt a Regional Trails Framework that maps existing routes, identifies priority connections, integrates tourism opportunities, and establishes design and maintenance standards.

4.3.2 Classify Regional Trails and trails in Regional Parks using the classification guidelines outlined in section 5 in accordance with the National Guidelines for Classifying Multi-Use Trails in Canada, ensuring consistent standards for safety, accessibility, and user experience.

4.3.3 Pursue opportunities to connect communities, parks, and regional destinations through strategic trail linkages, using a mix of acquisitions, easements, and partnerships.

4.3.4 Upgrade trailheads, signage, and amenities, particularly at Regional Parks and Trails that function as primary trail access points, to enhance user experience, safety, and accessibility.

4.3.5 Collaborate with municipalities, First Nations, and other land managers to coordinate planning, secure funding, and ensure consistent trail quality across jurisdictions.

4.4 STRENGTHEN FOCUS ON OUTDOOR RECREATION & VISITOR EXPERIENCE

Goals Supported



**Outstanding
Recreation**



**Enhance
Access**



**Advance
Inclusion**



**Protect
and Steward**



**Strengthen
Community**



**Operational
Excellence**

Outdoor recreation is a cornerstone of the quality of life in the RDCK, enhancing physical and mental well-being, fostering connections with nature, supporting tourism, and strengthening the local outdoor recreation economy.

A diverse mix of recreation options helps ensure that the RDCK system meets the needs of all residents and visitors. Demand exists for both traditional and emerging activities, along with multi-season and multi-generational experiences that support families and key RDCK demographics such as seniors and older adults. Diversifying recreation opportunities requires intentional planning for a range of activities, difficulty levels, and settings, from accessible waterfront areas to challenging backcountry routes. While also ensuring that these experiences remain nature-based, non-motorized (with the exception of mobility aids and class 1 e-bikes), and environmentally sustainable. This approach also involves enhancing amenities, programming, and partnerships to broaden access and appeal, while respecting the site capacity and protecting natural and cultural resources. At the same time, there is a growing demand for purpose-built, activity-focused recreation areas, including mountain bike networks, climbing areas, paddling routes, major trailheads, and accessible waterfront sites. Responding to this shift requires intentional planning for specific recreation functions, rather than attempting to accommodate all activities at all sites. Activity-focused Regional Parks and Regional Recreation Areas can be optimized to support particular uses, skill levels, and user groups, while reducing environmental impacts and operational complexity.

A central principle of the RDCK regional park system is ensuring that both high-quality recreation opportunities and the protection of significant ecological and cultural values are prioritized. This means recognizing that each site in the network will have its own classification and management zones—some may be designed primarily for active nature-based recreation, others may focus on ecological conservation with limited amenities and infrastructure, and many will fall somewhere in between. The overall system will provide a balanced mix that connects people to nature while safeguarding sensitive environments, with management decisions informed by site-specific conditions, long-term sustainability, and the needs of both current and future generations.

This strategy also responds to key trends in outdoor recreation participation, indicating strong interest in cycling, paddling, hiking, and nature play, along with growing demand for accessible and inclusive opportunities.

- 4.4.1** Expand the amount of recreation-focused regional parklands (e.g., regional recreation parks, regional recreation areas) to address identified gaps such as paddling routes, freshwater swimming areas, mountain bike-optimized trails, climbing areas, and accessible/adaptive recreation facilities.
- 4.4.2** Use management zones to support regional recreation hubs with activity zones for varying skill levels and abilities that support multi-season use (e.g., cycling, skiing, paddling, hiking).
- 4.4.3** Provide a diversity of sustainable, multi-use, activity-optimized, universally accessible, and appropriately located recreation opportunities in alignment with the classification system, management zoning, and environmental safeguards. Ensure regional parks and trails support existing activities as well as emerging activities identified through engagement (e.g., pump tracks, disc golf, climbing areas).
- 4.4.4** Identify and designate specific sites or trail segments for managed motorized recreation (e.g., snowmobiling, off-road vehicles) where appropriate, ensuring that environmental, safety, and community considerations are addressed.
- 4.4.5** Enhance amenities such as toilets, benches, shade structures, secure bike parking, water stations, and wildlife-proof waste/recycling receptacles to improve visitor comfort and convenience.
- 4.4.6** Activate parks and trails through expanded programming in partnership with community groups, First Nations, schools, and tourism operators, with offerings such as environmental education, cultural interpretation, “learn to” programs, equity and inclusion initiatives, adaptive recreation opportunities, and art in the park.
- 4.4.7** Modernize infrastructure and design guidelines to meet accessibility standards, ensure climate resilience, and reflect evolving visitor expectations.
- 4.4.8** Support compatible commercial and tourism-oriented recreation opportunities through partnerships and permits, ensuring they align with system goals, enhance the visitor experience, and protect ecological and cultural values.
- 4.4.9** Enhance digital tools for trip planning, education, and trail navigation.

4.5 PROTECT AND CONSERVE ECOLOGICALLY SIGNIFICANT LAND/ AREAS

Goals Supported



**Outstanding
Recreation**



**Enhance
Access**



**Advance
Inclusion**



**Protect
and Steward**



**Strengthen
Community**



**Operational
Excellence**

The RDCK is home to rich biodiversity, critical habitats, and culturally significant areas. This strategy is grounded in strong community support for conserving these areas, while balancing recreation to protect sensitive values. The RDCK regional parks system values the importance of habitat connectivity, climate resilience, and cultural preservation, while engagement results confirm residents' willingness to prioritize protection over development in certain locations. Protecting ecologically and culturally significant lands requires an evidence-based approach to planning and decision-making. Depending on the sensitivity, scale, and nature of a proposed park acquisition, improvement, or development, the RDCK may undertake Initial Environmental Assessments or Biophysical Studies, and, where warranted, more detailed Environmental Impact Assessments. These assessments help identify sensitive habitats, species at risk, hydrological features, and cultural values, while also helping inform appropriate park classification, management zoning, design standards, and permitted uses. This approach ensures that conservation objectives are clearly understood and integrated early in planning, and that recreation is directed to areas where impacts can be appropriately managed.

4.5.1 Identify high-priority conservation and cultural heritage lands using detailed mapping and data set analysis from available public data, RDCK regional parks and trails background report, staff expert input, and conservation partners across the region.

4.5.2 Implement restoration projects as needed, to enhance degraded habitats and protect critical ecosystem functions.

4.5.3 Manage visitor use to minimize impacts on sensitive areas, apply the use of park classifications and management zoning, (following guidelines set out in this strategy). Consider seasonal closures, domestic pet restrictions, recreation activity guidelines (e.g. motorized versus non-motorized use) and/or low-impact design standards where necessary.

4.6 PLAN FOR CLIMATE CHANGE RESILIENCE AND HAZARD PREPAREDNESS

Goals Supported



Outstanding
Recreation



Enhance
Access



Advance
Inclusion



Protect
and Steward



Strengthen
Community



Operational
Excellence

Climate change impacts (e.g. increased wildfire risk, flooding, extreme heat, and invasive species) pose significant challenges to the RDCK's parks, trails, and water access sites. RDCK's strategic plan and key policy documents underscore the importance of adapting infrastructure, operations, and natural areas to withstand these changes while ensuring visitor safety and system resilience. This strategy focuses on integrating climate risk assessment, adaptation measures, and emergency preparedness into all aspects of park planning and management.

Climate resilience does not always mean rebuilding or replacing damaged infrastructure. As climate-related hazards such as flooding, erosion, wildfire, extreme weather events, and shoreline change become more frequent and severe, some parks, trails, water access sites, and amenities may become increasingly difficult, costly, or inappropriate to maintain in their current locations. In these circumstances, the RDCK will consider a range of adaptation responses including redesign, relocation, rerouting, seasonal closures, service level adjustments, and where necessary, managed retreat or decommissioning. Decisions will be guided by public benefit, environmental sustainability, visitor safety, financial responsibility, and system resilience.

4.6.1 Conduct vulnerability assessments for all regional parks, trails, and water access sites to identify climate and hazard risks.

4.6.2 Implement climate adaptation measures such as wildfire fuel management, riparian and wetland restoration, and heat-mitigating infrastructure (e.g., shade structures, drought-tolerant landscaping).

4.6.3 Incorporate climate change considerations into design and development of regional parks infrastructure.

4.6.4 Integrate hazard preparedness and emergency response protocols into operational plans, including evacuation routes, communications, and partnerships with emergency services.

4.6.5 Develop public education initiatives to build community awareness about climate change impacts, hazard safety, and stewardship practices.

4.6.5 Develop a climate adaptation and managed retreat framework to guide decision-making regarding infrastructure reinvestment, relocation, rerouting, service reductions, and decommissioning of parks, trails, water access sites, and amenities affected by climate-related hazards.

4.7 RECONCILIATION

Goals Supported



Outstanding
Recreation



Enhance
Access



Advance
Inclusion



Protect
and Steward



Strengthen
Community



Operational
Excellence

First Nations have stewarded the lands and waters in the region since time immemorial and the RDCK values their connections to the lands and waters within regional parks and trails. The RDCK also recognizes that the acquisition, development, management and enjoyment of regional parks and trails can have impacts on First Nations' rights and values. Strong and respectful relationships with First Nations are critical to the RDCK's ability to steward lands in a way that honours cultural heritage and reflects shared values. This strategy emphasizes the importance of collaboration, co-management, and celebrating Indigenous history and presence throughout the park system. Reconciliation is a path of listening and learning that we walk together, and we acknowledge that this path will evolve over time as relationships deepen and new opportunities emerge.

4.7.1 Take action on areas of interests identified in the Ktunaxa Nation Council Traditional Use Study (TUS). Apply the land acquisition process to determine sites for additional consideration into the regional parks system.

4.7.2 Work with First Nations across the region to determine appropriate, realistic and meaningful ways for First Nations to take part in the governance of regional parks and trails (e.g. management planning, land acquisition, policy development).

4.7.3 Establish working co-management agreements or MOUs that meet the needs of all parties, for key areas of interest following the land acquisition strategy process.

4.7.4 Support Indigenous-led programming, storytelling, and cultural interpretation throughout RDCK regional parks and trails. This work should be guided by local First Nations Communities.

4.7.5 Where there is support from local First Nations and Indigenous People, the RDCK will work to integrate Indigenous language and place names on signage and mapping.

4.7.6 Explore opportunities for Indigenous economic development and tourism experiences within the regional park system.

4.7.7 To support working together in a good way, including respectful relationships, reconciliation and informed decision making, the RDCK will focus on establishing and working within Ethical Spaces Guidelines.

4.7.8 Provide ongoing staff training and work together with First Nations to explore dialogue that works towards co-management.

4.8 ADVANCE INCLUSION, EQUITY, AND ACCESSIBILITY STANDARDS

Goals Supported



**Outstanding
Recreation**



**Enhance
Access**



**Advance
Inclusion**



**Protect
and Steward**



**Strengthen
Community**



**Operational
Excellence**

Regional parks and trails must serve the diverse needs of all RDCK residents, regardless of age, ability, income, cultural background, or geographic location. Engagement findings and the background report highlight that many residents, particularly those living with disabilities, in rural and remote communities, or from equity-deserving groups, face barriers to enjoying nature-based recreation. These barriers include limited availability of accessible or adaptive facilities, infrastructure that does not meet accessibility standards, lack of transportation options, and insufficient information about which parks and trails are suitable for different abilities and interests.

This strategy commits to removing these barriers and embedding inclusion, equity, and accessibility into every aspect of the RDCK parks, trails, and water access system. It will focus on improving geographic equity in the distribution of regional parks and trails, increasing the supply of accessible and adaptive recreation opportunities, and collaborating with partners to deliver inclusive programs and services.

- 4.8.1** Expand the regional parks and trails network to improve geographic equity, prioritizing areas currently underserved by regional assets and increasing proximity for more residents.
- 4.8.2** Develop and apply an equity, diversity, and inclusion lens policy to guide the review of bylaws, policies, procedures, programs, and investments to ensure the needs of equity-deserving residents are addressed.
- 4.8.3** Adopt or develop Accessibility Design Guidelines to ensure infrastructure (e.g., trails, bridges, boardwalks, viewing platforms) and amenities (e.g., parking, toilets, benches, picnic tables, signage) are as accessible and inclusive as feasible.
- 4.8.4** Increase the supply and variety of accessible and adaptive recreation opportunities in high-use, close-to-community regional parks and trails, such as universally accessible loop trails, accessible swimming areas with adaptive features (e.g., MobiMat, accessible docks), contemplative/viewpoint spaces, and adaptive mountain biking trails with progression.
- 4.8.5** Undertake assessments of existing sites to identify accessibility gaps and prepare concept designs for improvements, supporting future funding applications.
- 4.8.6** Enhance marketing and visitor information for accessible and adaptive recreation opportunities to empower residents and visitors to make informed decisions.
- 4.8.7** Collaborate with organizations and other community partners to provide adaptive equipment, “try days,” and inclusive nature-based programming.
- 4.8.8** Where feasible, work with transit providers to improve transit access and active transportation routes/corridors connecting to or near regional parks and trails

4.9 STEWARDSHIP, INTERPRETATION, AND ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS AND PARTNERSHIPSS

Goals Supported



**Outstanding
Recreation**



**Enhance
Access**



**Advance
Inclusion**



**Protect
and Steward**



**Strengthen
Community**



**Operational
Excellence**

Stewardship, interpretation, and environmental education are vital to fostering a strong conservation ethic and building community connections to RDCK parks and trails. There is a need for more programming, enhanced interpretive signage, and volunteer opportunities. As well, current RDCK relationships and policies highlight the role of partnerships in delivering these initiatives. This strategy combines the community-based stewardship approach with improved signage, branding, and educational programming, with the Kokanee Creek Nature Centre serving as a flagship hub for nature interpretation and environmental learning.

4.9.1 Develop an interpretation strategy for the regional parks and trails system, identifying priority themes, locations, and delivery methods (e.g., signage, public art, live programs).

4.9.2 Strengthen partnership with local community based organizations and other groups to expand year-round interpretive and environmental education programs across the RDCK.

4.9.3 Develop consistent, high-quality interpretive signage that connects visitors to the ecological and cultural stories of each site.

4.9.4 Support volunteer stewardship initiatives by providing training, resources, and recognition, enabling residents to take an active role in park and trail care.

4.9.5 Launch seasonal events, workshops, and outreach campaigns that promote stewardship, conservation practices, and environmental awareness.

4.10 DEVELOP A SIGNAGE, BRANDING, AND WAYFINDING STRATEGY (POLICY)

Goals Supported



**Outstanding
Recreation**



**Enhance
Access**



**Advance
Inclusion**



**Protect
and Steward**



**Strengthen
Community**



**Operational
Excellence**

A clear and consistent visual identity, coupled with effective wayfinding, enhances visitor confidence, safety, and sense of place. Engagement results stressed the need for better signage, cohesive branding, and more intuitive navigation tools across the RDCK system. Well-executed signage also supports education, interpretation, and promotion of a regional identity.

4.10.1 Develop a consistent regional signage and branding system for all RDCK regional parks and trails.

4.10.2 Implement a wayfinding strategy to improve navigation, accessibility, and visitor safety.

4.10.3 Incorporate cultural and ecological interpretation into signage to reflect the identity and diversity of the region. Ensure strong partnerships and co-development of signage with First Nations across the region.

4.10.4 Coordinate with partners to align branding and signage standards across jurisdictions.

4.11 STRENGTHEN REGIONAL AND COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

Goals Supported



**Outstanding
Recreation**



**Enhance
Access**



**Advance
Inclusion**



**Protect
and Steward**



**Strengthen
Community**



**Operational
Excellence**

Partnerships are fundamental to how the RDCK delivers high-quality programs, services, and manages facilities and amenities including regional parks and trails. Working with First Nations, municipalities, community groups, and non-profit organizations enables the RDCK to expand capacity, share expertise, leverage funding, and secure land for conservation and recreation. Many of the region's successes, from land acquisitions to program delivery, have been achieved through collaboration. This strategy focuses on formalizing, expanding, and diversifying partnerships to maximize benefits for residents, visitors, and the environment.

4.11.1 Develop and maintain formal partnership agreements with municipalities, First Nations, non-profits, stewardship groups, and senior government agencies to define roles, responsibilities, and shared priorities.

4.11.2 Work with the non-profit organizations and foundations to identify, fund, and secure high-value land acquisitions for conservation and recreation.

4.11.3 Collaborate with community organizations to co-deliver programs, events, and stewardship initiatives, sharing resources and expertise to enhance regional reach.

4.11.4 Create a partnership engagement framework to identify new opportunities, monitor partnership effectiveness, and celebrate joint achievements.

4.12 REVIEW SERVICE DELIVERY MODEL

Goals Supported



**Outstanding
Recreation**



**Enhance
Access**



**Advance
Inclusion**



**Protect
and Steward**



**Strengthen
Community**



**Operational
Excellence**

After more than 50 years of acquiring parkland and establishing regional parks and trails, the RDCK regional parks system and services are in need of a review. This review should investigate the opportunity for transitioning to a system with clearly defined “regional” and “sub-regional” tiers, to ensure equitable funding and service levels.

Many regional assets, such as destination parks, long-distance trails, and unique ecological or cultural sites are drawing visitors from across the RDCK and beyond. These assets protect regionally significant features, support biodiversity conservation, and provide recreation opportunities that cannot be replicated at the community scale. However, under the current model, funding for these assets is tied to specific service areas (sub-regional commissions), which can lead to inconsistent service levels, deferred maintenance, and missed opportunities for system-wide benefits. A system-wide review will provide the RDCK with a deeper understanding of how its parks and trails function collectively, and how they can best meet the needs of residents across the region.

The RDCK’s current bylaw does not allow for funding to support regional parks that serve the entire RDCK tax base; either by providing unique regional recreation opportunities or by protecting regionally significant ecological, historical, or cultural features. The current sub-regional funding model can result in inadequate resources for regionally significant parks and trails and may place an undue burden on specific service areas. Additionally, as visitation increases, reallocating funds towards parks experiencing high traffic and amenity use may support the ability to align the budget with actual usage, ensuring that resource-intensive sites receive the necessary operational and capital support. This comprehensive review would provide the RDCK the deep understanding needed to determine if transitioning to a regional and sub-regional system would ensure that all residents contribute to, and benefit from, the parks and trails that serve the broader region.

However, this shift would require governance changes, funding model updates, and clear communication with all stakeholders, therefore this strategy is recommending a detailed review of the pros and cons of this shift with a systematic approach to engagement and consultation to determine the best option for the RDCK regional parks and trails service. This review will not assume an immediate transition but will instead assess the potential benefits, risks, and implementation requirements of a new model. It will include financial analysis, governance review, and extensive consultation with municipal partners, First Nations, Electoral Area Directors, and the public. The outcome will provide the evidence base needed to determine whether a new system would improve fairness, sustainability, and service delivery.



- 4.12.1** Building upon the jurisdictional comparison completed in the Background Research Report initiate a comprehensive review of the RDCK Regional Parks and Trails System to evaluate governance structures, funding models, and service delivery mechanisms across all sub-regional areas.
- 4.12.2** Expand the existing jurisdictional analysis through targeted engagement with peer regional districts to gather insights on best practices, governance transitions, and funding mechanisms.
- 4.12.3** Analyze visitor use patterns, geographic distribution, and management needs to identify parks and trails with regional significance.
- 4.12.4** Based on the classifications outlined in Section 5 of the strategy and the comprehensive visitor data, conduct a financial and operational assessment to understand the costs, benefits, and potential implications of refining or restructuring the current sub-regional framework to include regional assets.
- 4.12.5** Develop a summary report and recommendations outlining options, financial implications, governance structures, and timelines for decision-making.
- 4.12.6** Engage with Electoral Areas, municipalities, First Nations, community partners, and the public through workshops, surveys, and discussions to gather input and test potential models.
- 4.12.7** Create a communication and engagement report to share findings and support informed decision-making by the RDCK Board and the community.

4.13 ENHANCE REGIONAL PARKS AND TRAILS CLASSIFICATION SYSTEM

Goals Supported



**Outstanding
Recreation**



**Enhance
Access**



**Advance
Inclusion**



**Protect
and Steward**



**Strengthen
Community**



**Operational
Excellence**

A clear and transparent classification system ensures that each regional park and trail in the RDCK system is managed according to its intended role, service level, and community benefit. This system should align with recognized best practices, such as the [Canadian Guidebook for the Application of IUCN Protected Area Categories](#), and would serve as a structured framework to guide management intent, public access, facility development, programming, and maintenance standards. By defining categories such as Regional Conservation Parks, Regional Recreation Parks, and Sub-Regional/Community Parks, the RDCK would ensure each site's purpose and role in the system is clearly articulated. Details on the classification system are found under Planning Tools (Section 5). This would support informed decision-making for capital investment, operational priorities, and future land acquisition while ensuring residents understand the intent and opportunities at each site.

4.13.1 Develop and adopt a comprehensive classification framework with clear definitions, management goals, and compatible uses for each category.

4.13.2 Assign every existing and future regional and sub-regional park, trail, and water access site a classification based on its primary purpose and management intent.

4.13.3 Use the classification system to guide capital investment, maintenance standards, and staffing allocations.

4.13.4 Use the classification system to inform the scale, type, and location of amenities, services, and visitor infrastructure.

4.13.5 Communicate the classification system clearly to the public through mapping, signage, and online resources.

4.13.6 Periodically review and update the classification system to ensure it reflects evolving environmental values, system growth, recreation trends, and community expectations and priorities.

4.14 STRENGTHEN OPERATIONAL CAPACITY AND ASSET MANAGEMENT

Goals Supported



Outstanding
Recreation



Enhance
Access



Advance
Inclusion



Protect
and Steward



Strengthen
Community



Operational
Excellence

The RDCK Regional Park and Trail System is highly valued and highly utilized, with visitation and the needs of the community increasing annually. A growing park and trail system requires robust operational capacity and a proactive approach to asset management to ensure quality, safety, and sustainability. Not every asset can or should be rebuilt indefinitely. The RDCK will make strategic decisions about where to invest, where to adapt, and where to withdraw in order to ensure the long-term sustainability of the regional system. The system currently has aging infrastructure, inconsistent maintenance, and staffing shortages that must be addressed. Additionally, operational funding and staffing must keep pace with system growth, increased visitation, and the aging of built and natural assets. This strategy prioritizes aligning resources with demand, establishing asset management systems that integrate natural and built assets, and ensuring trained staff are available to meet service expectations.

4.14.1 Develop and maintain a comprehensive asset inventory and management system that includes both built infrastructure and natural assets, using it to guide budgeting, maintenance scheduling, and renewal planning.

4.14.2 Develop operational levels of service, including standards for customer services. Review staffing levels based on current and future system needs and service delivery. Through this comprehensive review, the RDCK should align staffing levels, expertise, and maintenance resources with the expansion and intensification of the parks and trails system, including developing staffing ratios tied to service levels.

4.14.3 Create resource management plans for each regional park, trail, and water access site (when feasible and where applicable), identifying operational requirements, lifecycle costs, and risk management measures.[A49.1]

4.14.4 Explore shared service agreements and strategic partnerships with municipalities, community groups, and contractors to expand operational capacity, reduce costs, and improve service delivery.

4.14.5 Develop capital funding ratios to ensure timely access to funds for preparing newly acquired lands for public use and replacing or upgrading aging assets.

4.14.6 Pursue external funding sources, grants, and non-tax revenue strategies to support capital improvements, maintenance, and operational enhancements.

4.14.7 Provide ongoing staff training in areas such as asset management, visitor use management, inclusion and accessibility design, ecological restoration, and emergency response.

4.15 MONITOR, EVALUATE, AND ADAPT

Goals Supported



**Outstanding
Recreation**



**Enhance
Access**



**Advance
Inclusion**



**Protect
and Steward**



**Strengthen
Community**



**Operational
Excellence**

Planning for the RDCK's regional parks and trails system is a continuous and adaptive process, requiring regular monitoring, evaluation, and adjustment. This ensures that actions remain relevant, progress is measured, and resources are directed to the most effective priorities. Tracking both qualitative and quantitative indicators such as visitor satisfaction, ecological health, asset condition, and program participation will provide insight into the system's performance. These indicators will align with the goals of this strategy and build on existing data collection methods, supplemented by new measures where gaps exist.

A transparent and consistent reporting process will build accountability and public trust while supporting data-driven decision-making. Annual reporting will track progress and identify emerging issues, while more comprehensive reviews at defined intervals will enable the RDCK to refine strategies, update priorities, and adjust resources as needed.

4.15.1 Annual Progress Review: Undertake yearly assessments of accomplishments against the strategy's goals and actions, publishing a concise progress report for the public and stakeholders.

4.15.2 Operational Reporting and Public Accountability: Prepare a concise year-end Regional Parks Operations Report that summarizes key activities, investments, outcomes, challenges, and emerging priorities. This report would demonstrate how operational work supports the goals of this strategy, informs future budget and capital requests, and responds to community needs. Where appropriate, the report could be publicly shared to improve transparency.

4.15.3 Five-Year Indicator Reporting: Produce a summary of key indicators every five years, including trends in ecological condition, visitation, asset performance, and community engagement. Use findings to adjust implementation priorities.

4.15.4 Mid-Term Review: Complete a comprehensive review of the Strategy at the 5-year mark, engaging partners, stakeholders, and the public to assess performance and update actions.

4.15.5 Integration with Asset Management and Land Acquisition: Regularly review and update the asset management system and land acquisition priorities to reflect new information, changing conditions, and emerging opportunities.

4.15.6 Adaptive Management: Apply an adaptive management approach, where monitoring results directly inform adjustments to management practices, budgets, and project priorities.

5

PLANNING TOOLS



5.1 LAND ACQUISITION PROCESS

Land acquisition enables the RDCK to secure and protect significant natural and cultural landscapes, enhance ecological resilience, improve public access to recreation, and address geographic inequities in the system. This process establishes a clear, transparent framework for making acquisition decisions, ensuring that investments are aligned with regional priorities, supported by partnerships, and are financially sustainable. To remain effective, the RDCK must act decisively when acquisition opportunities arise.

The RDCK recognizes that First Nations have significant interests in land acquisition and may independently pursue the acquisition of lands in the region for Indigenous Protected and Conserved Areas or other community or economic development purposes. Where permitted by legislation, and where specific sites contain values of mutual interest, the RDCK may explore opportunities to collaborate with First Nations on land acquisition.

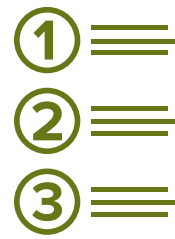
5.1.1 External Land Proposals

External, community and partner-initiated proposals can play an important role in identifying lands and opportunities that respond to community needs, improve recreation access, protect valued landscapes, enhance water access, strengthen regional trail connectivity, support reconciliation, or advance stewardship and conservation priorities. To support consistent, transparent, and evidence-informed decision-making, the RDCK will implement a standardized intake and evaluation process for proposals initiated by external partners, community groups, organizations, governments, Indigenous communities, landowners, and other stakeholders. This process will ensure that sufficient information is available to evaluate opportunities in a fair and consistent manner while recognizing the unique nature of each proposal.

Information considered during the review process may include:

- The nature, location, scale, and purpose of the proposal;
- Alignment with this Strategy and other relevant RDCK plans;
- Demonstrated community need, recreation demand, conservation value, or service gaps;
- Community support, potential impacts, and opportunities for collaboration;
- First Nations interests, cultural considerations, and opportunities for partnership, stewardship, and reconciliation;
- Site suitability, feasibility, access considerations, and alternative approaches;
- Environmental, ecological, cultural heritage, archaeological, or technical considerations;
- Operational requirements, risks, liabilities, and long-term management responsibilities;
- Capital costs, operating impacts, lifecycle costs, funding opportunities, and financial sustainability; and
- Partnership capacity, implementation considerations, and long-term stewardship opportunities.

Following an initial review, proposals may proceed to more detailed evaluation, including technical analysis, due diligence investigations, acquisition assessment, financial review, partnership discussions, public engagement, or Board consideration, as appropriate. However, not all proposals will be appropriate or feasible for inclusion within the RDCK Regional Parks, Trails, and Water Access system. The RDCK will work to ensure that any new lands, amenities, or initiatives align with regional priorities and can be responsibly funded, operated, maintained, and managed over the long term.



Guiding Principles:

- **Recreation Access:** Target lands that improve service levels in underserved communities and remove barriers to participation.
- **Connectivity:** Acquire parcels that link existing parks, trails, and water access points into an integrated regional network.
- **Water Access Protection:** Secure public access to lakes, rivers, and riparian areas, particularly where access is currently informal, limited, or threatened.
- **Conservation:** Protect high-value ecosystems, biodiversity hotspots, climate resilience features, and critical watersheds.
- **Cultural Stewardship:** Honour and protect sites of Indigenous and community heritage significance.
- **Leveraged Investment:** Prioritize opportunities that involve partnerships, cost-sharing, and/or donated lands.
- **Operational Viability:** Ensure long-term maintenance, staffing, and financial capacity.
- **Demonstrated community need:** Ensure regional parks and trails provide public benefit, meet recreation demand, conservation values, or service gaps.
- **Community support:** All lands have been evaluated on potential impacts to neighbouring residents or park users, and opportunities for collaboration or partnerships.

Priority Acquisition Areas:

- **Recreation Hubs and Facilities:** Acquire lands for outdoor recreation areas that support activities such as hiking, cycling, paddling, winter sports, and community events, ensuring they are designed and managed for environmental sustainability.
- **Natural Areas and Ecologically Significant Areas:** Secure lands that safeguard sensitive ecosystems, species-at-risk habitats, and landscapes critical for climate resilience.
- **Trails and Connectivity Corridors:** Protect linear corridors and parcels that complete regional trail systems, provide safe staging areas, or link communities.
- **Waterfront and Riparian Access:** Secure shoreline properties that provide equitable public access and support healthy aquatic ecosystems.
- **Cultural Heritage Sites:** Protect and interpret lands with significant Indigenous, historical, or community heritage value.

Process

The acquisition process is structured around three-steps, each ensuring that potential acquisitions are carefully evaluated, strategically negotiated, and successfully integrated into the regional system. This process is designed to be both proactive and responsive, enabling the RDCK to advance planned priorities while remaining agile when unexpected opportunities arise.

Within this process, potential land acquisitions will all be assessed using an evaluation approach that balances efficiency with depth of analysis. The detailed assessment criteria and scoring framework are outlined in Section 5.2. Figure 14 provides an overview of the overall land acquisition process, from inquiry to integration into the RDCK Regional Parks and Trails System.

Acquisition Process Steps	Key Actions
Step 1: Planning and Identification	Identify areas of interest through any or all of the following methods: • Technical analysis. • Community proposals. • Indigenous engagement/proposals. • Private landownership or partnership proposals.
	Apply the detailed screening process, including scoring and evaluating of assessment criteria, to determine site suitability and if the area meets the minimum threshold for consideration.
	Where applicable, review potential sites/areas with First Nations. This step allows for a collaborative review of the merits of the candidate sites with First Nations in the region. This would also identify concerns, sites that support or conflict with First Nations land acquisition interests, and opportunities for collaboration and shared interests.
	Confirm sites of interest for inclusion and consideration as Regional Parks / Trails.
	Seek RDCK Board approval (or Recreation Commission approval) for the site of interest (to move to stage 2). As needed, update areas of interest for regional parks or trails acquisition in the regional strategy.

Acquisition Process Steps	Key Actions
Step 2: Land Acquisition, Negotiation, and Securing Lands	Prepare a comprehensive pre-acquisition briefing for senior management and Board approval when a potential acquisition opportunity is identified. Acquisition briefings should include the following: • Map of the property. • Description of the environmental, recreational, and cultural values. • Results of the detailed assessment and scoring. • Potential role within the regional parks, trails, or water access system. • Alignment with RDCK goals. • Historical background of the site. • Preliminary appraisal data. • Proposed acquisition funding model. • Funding partnership and collaboration opportunities. • Anticipated negotiation considerations. • Offer price or range (if purchase is the intended mechanism).
	Undertake due diligence, including: • Reviewing land titles information. • Conducting a property inspection. • Inventorying and confirming site values (environmental, recreational, and cultural). • Identifying potential risks and constraints. Once all due diligence is completed and the RDCK Board/relevant Recreation Commission has reviewed the details of the site, proceed to negotiate acquisition price and conditions with the landowner. Sign an option to acquire, securing the opportunity while assessments are completed.
	Prepare a final Board/Commission report for approval to acquire, including mapping, relevant documents/reports, costs, conditions, and evaluation results. Obtain RDCK Board/Commission approval to proceed with the acquisition.
	Develop a comprehensive communication plan to announce the acquisition publicly after transfer of title is complete.
Step 3: Post Acquisition Planning and Opening	Dedicate the site as a regional park or trail, assign appropriate classification, management zones, and update relevant zoning bylaws and statutory documents.
	Undertake site management and design plans as necessary.
	Undertake any necessary infrastructure and amenity developments (pending classification) necessary to provide and manage visitor use. Obtain necessary permits required by local bylaws or provincial legislation.
	Open the site to the public and promote visitation (pending classification).

Figure 15: Land Acquisition Process

Transfer of Land from Other Jurisdictions

There may be instances when the RDCK is approached by member municipalities, individual Electoral Areas, provincial park or Crown land managers, land trusts, or private landowners with proposals to transfer local or community parks, Crown lands, or privately owned lands into the regional parks and trails system (thereby negating the need to purchase lands). These opportunities will be carefully evaluated on a case-by-case basis to ensure alignment with RDCK's vision, goals, and long-term operational capacity.

Proposals for land transfers will receive strong consideration when they meet one or more of the following criteria:

- **Expansion of an Existing Regional Park:** The site directly expands the boundaries or enhances the ecological, recreational, or cultural value of an existing regional park.
- **High-Value Regional Park Candidate:** The site scores highly against RDCK's land acquisition evaluation criteria and demonstrates clear potential to serve as a regional park or trail.
- **Addresses a Connectivity or Infrastructure Gap:** The site closes a gap in the regional trail network or provides opportunities to add important amenities, staging areas, or infrastructure along an existing route.
- **Operationally Sustainable:** The projected operational costs are reasonable, sustainable, and can be accommodated within the RDCK's budget without compromising service levels elsewhere.



Image Source: RDCK

Partnerships and Funding

Partnerships are central to the RDCK's ability to secure high-priority lands in a cost-effective and timely manner. Successful acquisitions often result from collaboration between public agencies, First Nations, non-profit organizations, land trusts, and private donors. In recent years, partnerships with organizations such as the BC Parks Foundation have demonstrated the potential to leverage regional investment with provincial fundraising capacity, donor networks, and conservation expertise.

The RDCK will continue to cultivate partnerships with:

- First Nations/Indigenous Peoples: Collaborating on shared stewardship goals, co-management agreements, and joint acquisition priorities.
- Conservation Organizations and Land Trusts: Partnering to secure ecologically significant lands, access specialized expertise, and share acquisition costs.
- Provincial and Federal Governments: Accessing capital funding programs and grants that support parkland acquisition, ecological restoration, and climate resilience.
- Private Donors and Philanthropic Foundations: Encouraging direct land donations, conservation covenants, or financial contributions toward acquisitions.
- Local Governments and Community Groups: Partnering on joint projects to increase access, share infrastructure costs, and engage the public in stewardship.

Partnership Highlight – BC Parks Foundation & RDCK at Rosebud Lake

The 2025 acquisition of Rosebud Lake Regional Park was made possible through a landmark partnership between the RDCK and the BC Parks Foundation, combining local leadership with provincial fundraising expertise. This collaboration safeguarded an ecologically rich and culturally significant landscape, ensuring permanent public access and long-term protection for future generations.

5.2 ASSESSMENT CRITERIA AND SCORING FRAMEWORK

Assessment Criteria

The regional parks and trails assessment criteria enable:

- A structured and largely objective evaluation of a site's suitability to become a regional park or trail.
- Acquisition decisions to be aligned with the vision and goals of the Regional Parks and Trails System and community priorities.
- A transparent and evidence-based decision-making process.

The evaluation of potential sites will be conducted using the following criteria. There are a total of 20 criteria, and each criterion will be scored out of 5 (scale 0-5, see 5.2.1 for more detail). The evaluation and relative scoring will be used to help the RDCK determine the desirability or how well a potential site/area aligns with the RDCK regional park and trails values, vision, and goals. The regional park acquisition criteria are organized into four categories:

1. **Recreation.**
2. **Conservation.**
3. **Community needs and priorities.**
4. **Operational capacity and alignment.**

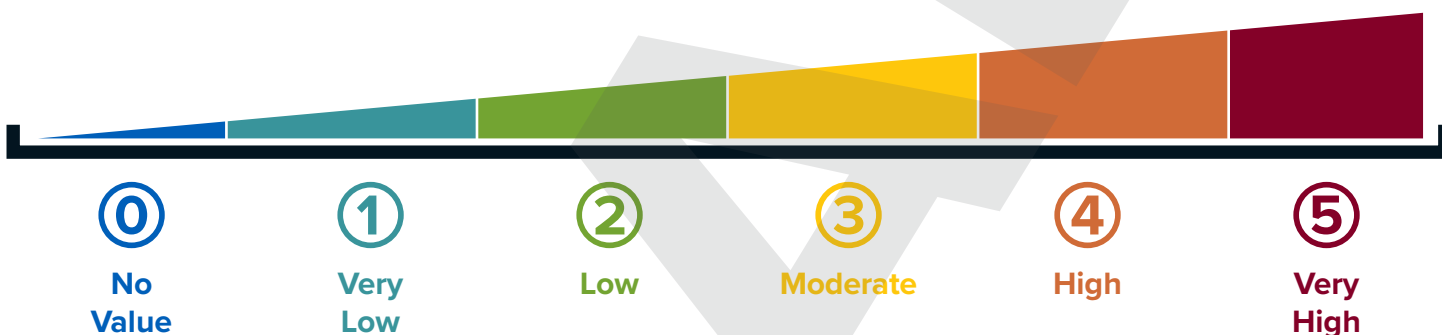


Image Source: RDCK

5.2.1 Scoring/Rating

A points rating system will be used to evaluate how well candidate park or trail acquisitions align with RDCK's vision, goals, and priorities. Each site or route will be assessed against the established criteria using a **5-point scale (0–5)**, where **0 = no value** and **5 = very high value**. This approach allows for a consistent, transparent, and comparable method of assessment while recognizing that professional judgement and local context will always play a role in decision-making. Scores for each criterion are combined to produce a composite score, which represents the overall degree of alignment between a potential site and the Regional Parks, Trails, and Water Access Strategy. The composite score is intended to identify high-potential opportunities, areas of concern and inform prioritization and sequencing of acquisition efforts. Importantly, the composite score does not represent a pass/fail threshold, nor does it predetermine acquisition decisions. Sites with similar scores may differ significantly in character, risk, cost, or strategic relevance, and may warrant different recommendations.

5 Point Rating Scale



Because the number and type of criteria differ between categories, a weighting system will be applied to ensure that each category is represented fairly and reflects its importance to the RDCK.

Recognizing that numerical scoring alone cannot fully capture the complexity, context, and nuance of potential acquisition opportunities, a qualitative narrative assessment will also be included to provide a more complete and defensible basis for comparison and decision-making.

5.2.2 Regional Park Categories and Criteria Overview

1. Recreation

- a. Nature-Based Recreation Features.
- b. Multi-Use Compatibility.
- c. Community Connectivity and Accessibility.
- d. Uniqueness.
- e. Scenic value/Viewscapes.

2. Community Needs and Priorities

- a. Public Interest and Identification.
- b. Regional Distribution.
- c. Cultural and Historic Value.
- d. Education or Interpretive Opportunity.
- e. Climate Resiliency.

3. Conservation

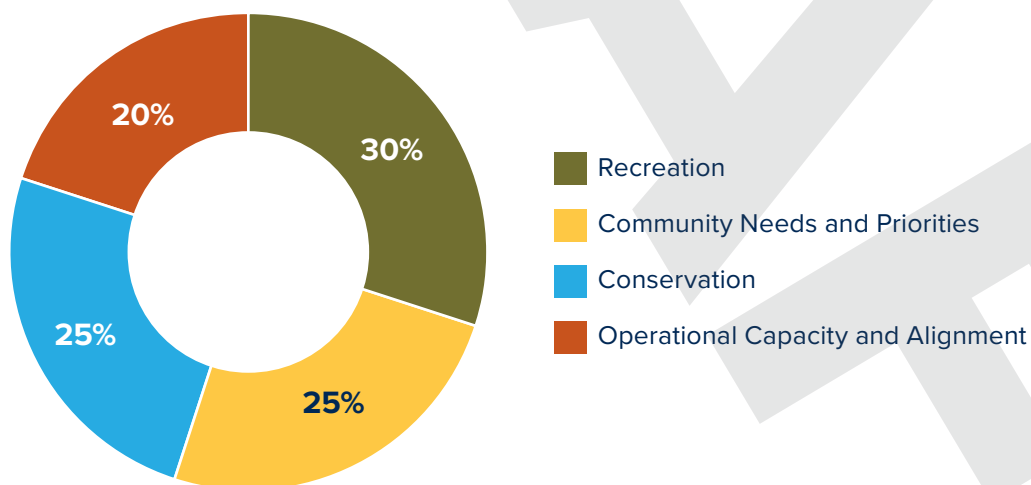
- a. Environmentally Sensitive Area (ESA).
- b. Endangered or Threatened Species Conservation.
- c. Landscape Representation.
- d. Landscape Connectivity.
- e. Identified conservation Priority.

4. Operational Capacity and Alignment

- a. Land Ownership.
- b. OCP and Zoning Alignment.
- c. Development and Operational Costs.
- d. Existing/Identified Area of Interest.
- e. Partnership Opportunities and Alignment.

Each criterion is outlined in detail in the following section (5.2.1.1).

Regional Parks Categories and Criteria Overviews: Based on public engagement and the guiding values described in section 1.6, regional parks land acquisitions will be reviewed using a weighted approach. Each of the four categories will carry the following weighting:



Within each category, the criteria scores will be averaged, and the category weighting applied to generate the final score.

5.2.2 Criteria Explanation

When evaluating potential acquisitions for regional parks, the RDCK will apply a set of criteria designed to ensure that new sites provide meaningful recreation opportunities, protect important ecological and cultural values, and contribute to community needs and resiliency. These criteria establish a consistent framework to assess the significance, feasibility, and long-term benefit of potential park lands within the regional system. Each potential park site will be scored from 0–5 against the criteria, with higher scores reflecting stronger alignment with RDCK priorities for regional park protection, development, and management.

Recreation		Score (0-5)
Nature-Based Recreation Features	<i>To what extent does the site provide, or have the potential to provide, high-demand outdoor recreation opportunities that are underrepresented in the RDCK system, and is the setting suitable for sustainable infrastructure and amenities to support these activities?</i>	
Multi-Use Compatibility	<i>To what extent can the site accommodate a wide range of recreation users of varying ages, abilities, and interests?</i>	
Community Connectivity and Accessibility	<i>To what extent does the site expand regional access by placing more households within a 10-minute drive of a regional park and offer convenient access for both visitors and maintenance through existing road or trail connections?</i>	
Uniqueness	<i>To what extent does the site provide distinctive or regionally significant recreation experiences not readily available elsewhere in the RDCK?</i>	
Scenic value/ Viewscapes	<i>To what extent does the site offer opportunities to experience memorable views of landscapes, natural features, and wildlife that enhance the overall visitor experience?</i>	

Community Needs and Priorities		Score (0-5)
Public Interest and Identification	<i>To what extent has the public or other interested parties expressed clear support for acquiring the site as part of the regional parks system?</i>	
Regional Distribution	<i>To what extent does the site expand regional park space in Electoral Areas or municipalities with comparatively low levels of regional park space per resident?</i>	
Cultural and Historic Value	<i>To what extent does the site contain known or likely archaeological resources, unique heritage features, or opportunities to advance reconciliation and strengthen relationships with First Nations?</i>	
Education or Interpretive Opportunity	<i>To what extent does the site provide unique opportunities to share knowledge and foster learning about the natural or cultural context of the RDCK region?</i>	
Climate Resiliency	<i>To what extent does the site contribute to climate change mitigation and adaptation by providing natural infrastructure that supports ecosystem services and community resilience?</i>	

Conservation		Score (0-5)
Environmentally Sensitive Area (ESA)	<i>To what extent does the site encompass environmentally sensitive areas—such as rare ecosystems, old growth forests, critical habitats, wetlands, or wildlife ranges—and support high levels of biodiversity and natural community diversity?</i>	
Endangered or Threatened Species Conservation	<i>To what extent does the site provide important habitat for rare, threatened, or endangered plants, animals, or ecosystems with recognized conservation value at the local, regional, provincial, or national scale?</i>	
Landscape Representation	<i>To what extent does the site represent distinctive or unique regional landscape types that are not well protected elsewhere in the RDCK and are of high ecological or public importance?</i>	
Landscape Connectivity	<i>To what extent does the site expand or connect with existing parks and conservation lands by maintaining unfragmented habitats, enhancing ecological linkages, and reducing pressures from development or invasive species?</i>	
Identified Conservation Priority	<i>To what extent has the site been identified by conservation organizations, partners, or regional/provincial strategies as a priority for protection?</i>	

Operational Capacity and Alignment		Score (0-5)
Land Ownership	<i>To what extent are the lands within the site feasible for acquisition and consistent with past regional park purchases?</i>	
OCP and Zoning Alignment	<i>To what extent is the site aligned with Official Community Plans, Local Area Plans, zoning, or recreation policies in a way that supports park establishment and minimizes conflict with existing land use designations?</i>	
Development and Operational Costs	<i>To what extent are the acquisition, development, and long-term operational costs reasonable and financially feasible relative to the community willingness to fund the development and operation of the park?</i>	
Existing/Identified Area of Interest	<i>To what extent has the site already been identified as a priority for securement?</i>	
Partnership Opportunities and Alignment	<i>To what extent does the site align with the priorities of federal, provincial, municipal, Indigenous partners, and non-profit organizations, and also create opportunities for collaboration in acquisition, management, or conservation?</i>	

5.2.3 Regional Trails Categories and Criteria Overview

When evaluating potential acquisitions for regional trails, the RDCK will apply a set of criteria that ensure new routes contribute meaningfully to recreation, transportation, and conservation priorities. These criteria provide a consistent framework to assess connectivity, feasibility, and community benefit, while supporting alignment with regional and partner plans. Each potential trail route will be scored from 0–5 against the criteria, with higher scores reflecting stronger alignment with RDCK priorities for regional trail development and acquisition.

Unlike regional parks, which are assessed across four broad categories with multiple criteria under each (recreation, community needs, conservation, and operational capacity), regional trails are evaluated using a streamlined framework with one key criterion under each category.

This difference reflects the distinct roles of regional trails:

- Primary purpose is to provide safe/connected routes that support a range of recreation types (e.g. non-motorized and motorized use).
- Advances active transportation.
- Acts as an ecological corridor.

Overall, parks serve a wide range of purposes that require a more detailed evaluation. Whereas trails are linear features where the most important considerations—connectivity, user experience, feasibility, conservation value, and partnerships—can each be captured in a single targeted criterion.

Due to regional trails having one criterion per category, weighting will be distributed equally across the six categories (*Connectivity, Recreation, Visitor Experience & Active Transportation, Natural & Cultural Corridors, Feasibility & Standards, and Partnerships & Alignment*). Each category will therefore account for **approximately 16.7% of the total score**.

The weighted scores will provide a total score out of 100 for each site or route. These results will be used as one component in determining acquisition priorities but will not be the sole factor in decision-making, as local conditions, opportunities, and partnerships may also influence recommendations.

Regional Trails		Score (0-5)
Connectivity	<i>To what extent does the route connect existing regional trails, communities, parks, or adjacent regional districts to create a continuous network?</i>	
Recreation	<i>To what extent does the route provide opportunities for diverse recreational uses, including both non-motorized and motorized activities where appropriate, that are in demand and enhance the RDCK trail system?</i>	
Visitor Experience & Active Transportation	<i>To what extent does the route provide high-quality trail experiences and contribute to active transportation options across the RDCK?</i>	
Natural & Cultural Corridors	<i>To what extent does the route protect or enhance natural corridors, sensitive ecosystems, or cultural landscapes while supporting recreation?</i>	
Feasibility & Standards	<i>To what extent is the route suitable for development to a regional trail standard, considering terrain, environmental constraints, and land ownership types that are feasible to secure?</i>	
Partnerships & Alignment	<i>To what extent does the route align with Official Community Plans, regional growth and sustainability strategies, or partner initiatives (federal, provincial, municipal, or Indigenous), and create opportunities for collaboration?</i>	



Image Source: RDCK

5.3 PARK AND TRAIL CLASSIFICATIONS

5.3.1 Defining the System

The RDCK's current park classification system was established to provide general direction for the purpose, use, and management of regional parks; however, it remains limited in scope and application across the broader system. Currently, the RDCK identifies four categories: Community Parks, Multiple Purpose Parks, Waterfront Access Parks, and Regional Trails.

Table 3: Current/Existing RDCK Regional Park Classification System

Regional Park Class	Outdoor Recreation Focus
Community Park	Parklands acquired through the subdivision approvals process for the purpose of providing green space in communities experiencing development
Multiple Purpose Park	Parks that are intended to provide for a wide range of indoor and outdoor recreation opportunities and should be capable of sustaining a high level and variety of recreational and other public use activities. These parks may be associated with waterfront access.
Waterfront Access Parks	Parks that are intended primarily to provide public access to high-quality waterfront areas and associated facilities, with the intensity of development dependent on the characteristics of each site.
Regional Trails	Trails that are intended to provide for trail-oriented recreation that could link communities, provide access to areas possessing scenic and special interest qualities and provide access to Provincial recreation opportunities, Regional District Parks and other recreation sites.

While these categories offer a high-level understanding of park function, they do not fully reflect the diversity of assets, experiences, and management needs across the system. The current framework also lacks sufficient specificity to guide consistent decision-making related to conservation, recreation intensity, infrastructure provision, and long-term operational requirements. Key gaps include the absence of a dedicated conservation classification, limited differentiation between high- and low-intensity recreation areas, and no formal recognition of culturally or historically significant sites.

In addition, overlapping categories, particularly between multiple purpose and waterfront access parks, create ambiguity in management intent, which can lead to challenges in prioritizing investment, protecting sensitive features, and aligning service delivery with site-specific conditions. Further, while regional trails are identified as a category, the system does not provide a structured approach to classifying trails based on use, experience, or management objectives.

As the RDCK continues to expand its asset base and respond to increasing demand for both recreation and conservation, there is a clear need for a more comprehensive and structured classification framework that better aligns with the diversity of assets, management objectives, and community needs across the region.

5.3.2 Park Classifications

Classification is a structured framework that helps staff align the overarching management intents of individual sites with the overall goals of the regional parks system. Classification allows staff to clearly and consistently determine the level of public access as well as the types of facilities, amenities, programming and maintenance levels that may be considered at a site. Classification also enables staff to identify gaps in the regional parks system and inform priorities for future acquisition.

The classification system has been established to align with the Canadian Guidebook for the Application of IUCN Protected Area Categories.

Each asset in the RDCK regional parks and trails system will be assigned a Park Class. Park Classes include:

1. Sport Park

2. Outdoor Recreation Park

3. Water Access Area
4. Conservation Area

5. Cultural and Heritage Area

Table 4: Park Classifications

Sport Park		RDCK Assets (draft)
Primary Purpose	Sport Parks are intended to support organized outdoor sport and athletic activities within a park setting. Their primary purpose is to provide dedicated space for structured sport use, training, and competition, emphasizing quality playing environments, functional design, and safe participation. While sport-focused, these parks remain part of the broader parks system and contribute to community well-being, physical activity, and opportunities for sport development within an outdoor context.	Riondel Regional Park (Future site – Campbell Field)
Visitor Experiences and Themes	Visitors experience structured, organized outdoor sport and athletic activity in a purpose-built setting. Experiences are centred on scheduled use such as training, games, and competitions, often associated with sports fields, supporting facilities, and adjacent parking or gathering areas. These parks are typically designed around sport participation.	

Outdoor Recreation Park		RDCK Assets (draft)
Primary Purpose	Outdoor Recreation Parks are designed to provide high-quality, nature-based recreation experiences that support active living, connection to place, and enjoyment of the outdoors. These parks accommodate a range of outdoor activities within natural or semi-natural settings and emphasize flexibility, multi-season use, and experiential diversity. The primary focus is on nature-based recreation that encourages exploration, physical activity, and time spent outdoors while respecting ecological and cultural values. Outdoor Recreation Parks may also serve as gateways to trail systems or water-based experiences, where appropriate.	Bigelow Bay Regional Park Bonnington Regional Park Cottonwood Lake Regional Park Crawford Creek Regional Park Crescent Valley Beach Regional Park Glacier Creek Regional Park
Visitor Experiences and Themes	Visitors experience diverse, nature-based recreation that supports movement, exploration, and time spent outdoors. Experiences may include using trails, discovering new areas, gathering at viewpoints, accessing beaches or campgrounds, and finding “something for everyone” within a shared landscape. These parks are places to explore, stay longer, and return to across seasons, with themes of discovery, connection to nature, flexibility, and shared enjoyment.	Krestova Regional Park Morning Mountain Regional Park Pass Creek Regional Park Taghum Beach Regional Park Waterloo Eddy Regional Park

Water Access Area		RDCK Assets (draft)
Primary Purpose	Water Access Areas exist to provide safe, clear, and sustainable access to lakes, rivers, and other waterbodies. Their primary role is to facilitate entry to the water for activities such as swimming, paddling, angling, or boating, while protecting shorelines and aquatic ecosystems from unmanaged or informal use. These areas prioritize clarity of access, safety, and environmental protection, concentrating water-based activity in locations that can be responsibly managed and enjoyed.	Balfour Beach Regional Park Sunshine Bay Regional Park Glade Regional Park James Johnstone Regional Park Lardeau Regional Park
Visitor Experiences and Themes	Visitors experience safe access to water, with the waterbody as the central focus. Experiences are purposeful and intuitive, such as launching a boat, paddling, swimming from a beach, fishing, using a wharf, or simply accessing the shoreline. There is an emphasis on public access, safety, stewardship, and minimizing barriers between people and water, rather than extended stays or multiple activity choices.	Robson Boat Ramp Regional Park Rosebery Parklands Regional Park

Conservation Area		RDCK Assets (draft)
Primary Purpose	Conservation Areas are established to protect ecologically sensitive lands and waters, with conservation as the dominant management objective. These areas safeguard biodiversity, wildlife habitat, and important ecosystem functions such as riparian protection, wetlands, and climate resilience features. Where appropriate, Conservation Areas may support low-impact public access that fosters appreciation, education, and stewardship, provided such use does not compromise ecological integrity. Recreation, if present, is secondary to conservation outcomes.	Crawford Creek Regional Park Rosebud Lake Regional Park Winlaw Regional and Nature Park
Visitor Experiences and Themes	Visitors experience quiet, low-impact engagement with nature, often through walking or discovery trails, viewing areas, and interpretive moments that highlight ecological processes. Experiences prioritize observation, learning, and appreciation rather than activity choice. These areas focus on protection, stewardship, and respect for sensitive landscapes, where recreation is secondary to conservation outcomes.	

Cultural and Heritage Area		RDCK Assets (draft)
Primary Purpose	Cultural and Heritage Areas are dedicated to protecting and celebrating places of cultural, historical, spiritual, or archaeological significance. These areas support learning, reflection, storytelling, and cultural continuity, including the recognition and stewardship of Indigenous cultural landscapes and heritage values. The primary focus is on protection and interpretation of cultural assets, with any associated recreation or access designed to be compatible with cultural meaning and long-term preservation.	Brilliant Bridge Regional Park Historic Ainsworth Wharf Regional Park McDonalds Landing Regional Park
Visitor Experiences and Themes	Visitors experience places of meaning, learning, and reflection, shaped by cultural stories, heritage values, and living traditions. Experiences may include walking interpretive trails, visiting viewpoints or gathering spaces, participating in guided experiences, or accessing culturally significant waterfronts. Management of these areas emphasizes storytelling, reconciliation, and cultural continuity, with the experience centred on understanding rather than recreation variety.	

5.3.3 Regional Trails

Trail classification is a comprehensive approach to making decisions about and documenting the intended characteristics of a trail and its uses. Classifying trails allows the RDCK to provide accurate and consistent information to visitors about our trails which in turn helps them to choose trails that are right for them. Within the RDCK regional trail system, the majority of regional trails and trails within regional parks are intended to support non-motorized recreation. These non-motorized trail areas are a defining feature of the regional system and will continue to be protected and managed as such to support safety, environmental stewardship, and high-quality visitor experiences. A portion of the Nelson–Salmo Great Northern Trail (NSGNT) is the only Regional Trail designated as suitable for motorized use, reflecting its unique history, design, and management context. New or additional motorized trail opportunities would require a detailed planning process, including demonstrated need, environmental and safety assessments, engagement with affected communities and partners, and clear direction from the RDCK Board. Importantly, such considerations would not result in the conversion of existing non-motorized regional trails or regional park trail networks to motorized use.

Regional trails and trails in regional parks will be reviewed and classified in accordance with the [National Guidelines for Classifying Multi-Use Trails in Canada](#) (established by the Trans Canada Trail) and designated uses set out by the RDCK. This innovative classification system (Figure 15) allows the RDCK to comprehensively classify trails, determine the design parameters for trails, and document these decisions for each trail in the Trail Management Objective (Appendix A). Once determined, the selected classification and design parameters will also provide a basis on which the RDCK will evaluate the condition and characteristics of each trail and prioritize initiatives to ensure trails are in line with the intended classification and design parameters.

Trail Management Objective

A TMO synthesizes and documents, in a single form, the management intention for a trail in a clear, consistent and understandable way. TMOs are referred to and use in guiding all future trail planning, design, construction, maintenance and management decisions.

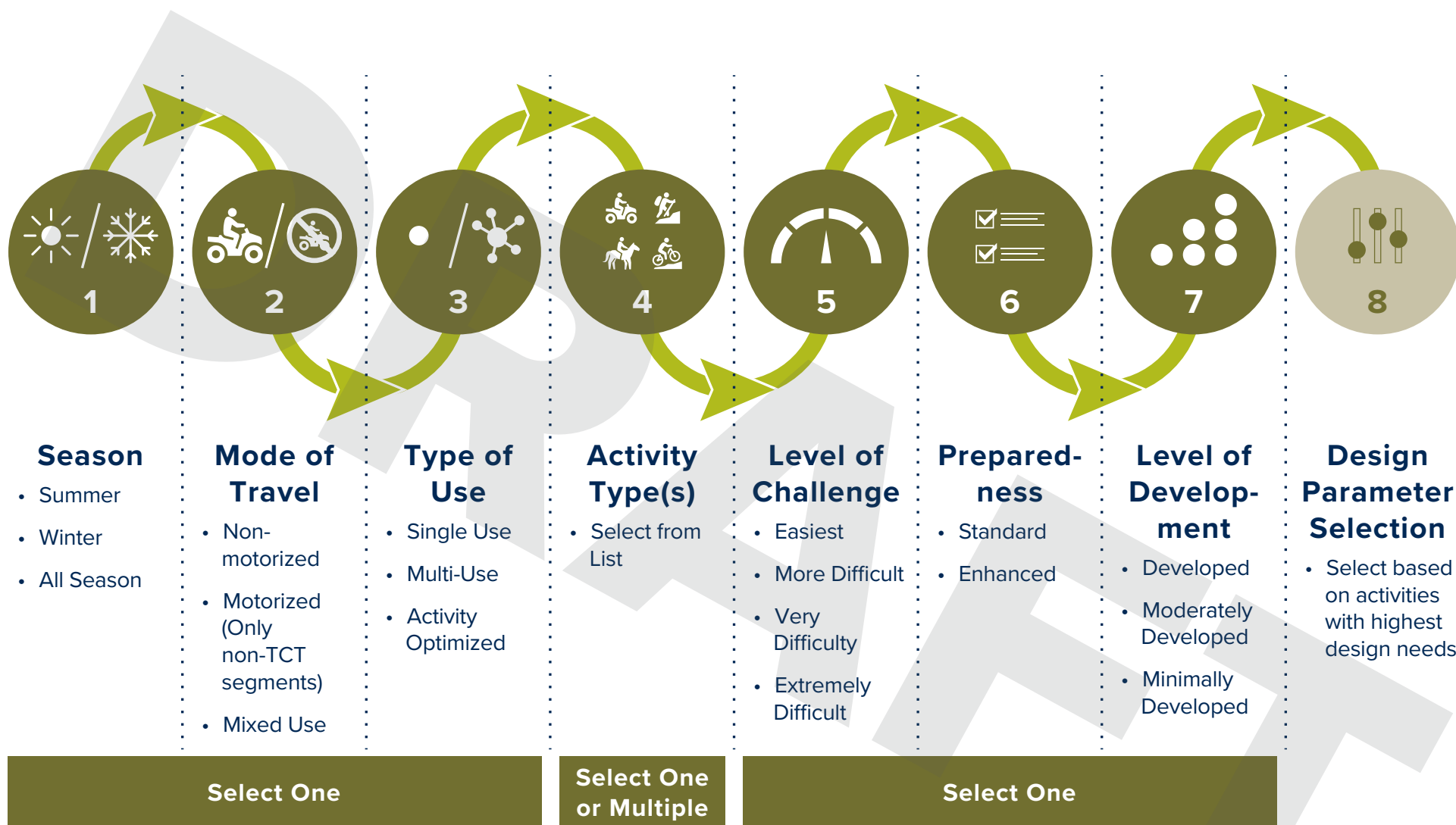


Figure 16: Trans Canada Trail (2021) Trail Classification System at a Glance

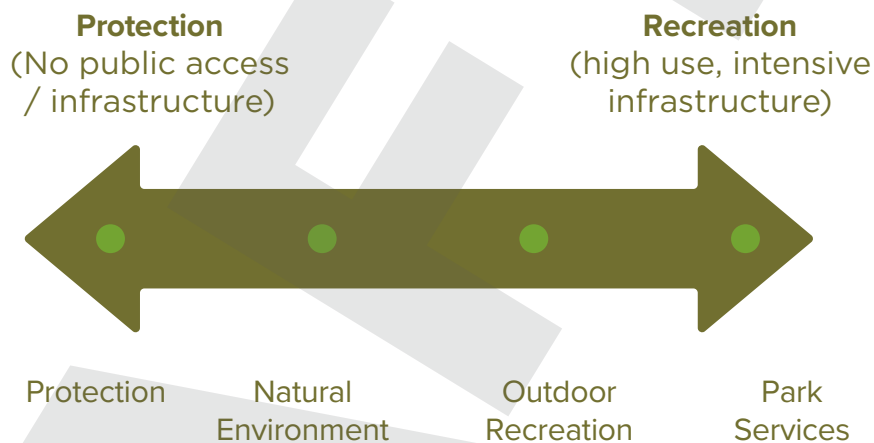
5.4 MANAGEMENT AND ZONING

Management zones are applied, where necessary, within individual regional parks or trails to provide more detailed management direction and further define where the goals of the regional parks and trails system will be delivered. Delineating management zones helps to balance competing management priorities such as conservation and outdoor recreation.

The process of zoning divides an individual regional park or trail into logical units based on:

- Values contained in each unit.
- Intended management intent.
- Existing and desired patterns.
- Types and intensity of visitation.
- Existing and desired facilities.
- Amenities.
- Intended level of management.

When applied, a regional park or trail may contain one, some, or all management zones.



Management Zones

Figure 17: Management Zone Spectrum

Table 5: Regional Parks and Trails Management Zones

Regional Parks and Trails Management Zones	Main Role of Zone	Zone Land	Zone Management
Protection Zone	- Biodiversity, wildlife habitat, environmentally sensitive area protection. - First Nations values are preserved.	- Sensitive ecosystems. - Areas of high conservation value. - E.g. Endangered species habitat, archeological/cultural/spiritual significant First Nations sites.	Public access, recreational use, infrastructure and amenities generally not permitted.
Natural Environment Zone	- Conserves biodiversity, wildlife habitat, environmentally sensitive areas and/or First Nations values. - Provides dispersed, low-intensity, nature-based outdoor recreation in a mid-county or backcountry recreation setting.	Sensitive ecological and/or First Nations values.	- Visitation actively managed through direct and indirect management strategies. - Visitation managed through appropriate visitor infrastructure (at minimum).
Nature-Based Outdoor Recreation Zone	- Conserves one or more regionally significant nature-based outdoor recreation features. - Provides outdoor recreation opportunities across front-country and mid-country settings	Nature-based outdoor recreation landscapes.	- May receive low to high visitation, and infrastructure/amenities should manage the intended visitor experience. - Not appropriate in areas where unique, threatened, or endangered natural or First Nations values, systems, or processes are present.
Access and Services Zone	Focused area for infrastructure that supports park access, learning, and site operations.	Intended for access and services and may be modified for such permitted/intended purposes.	- Minimize disturbance to natural features. - Not suitable for areas containing unique, threatened, or endangered natural or cultural features, systems, or processes.



Protection Zone:

This zone is dedicated to the protection of the park's biodiversity, wildlife habitat, environmentally sensitive areas, and First Nations values. It encompasses sensitive ecosystems and areas of high conservation value, such as habitats for endangered species or sites of archaeological, cultural or spiritual significance to First Nations that could be unacceptably impacted through public access. In these areas, the preservation of ecological and/or First Nations values is the highest priority. Public access, recreational use, and infrastructure and amenities are generally not permitted to ensure their long-term protection.



Natural Environment Zone:

This zone conserves biodiversity, wildlife habitat, environmentally sensitive areas and/or First Nations values while providing compatible, dispersed and low-intensity nature-based outdoor recreation in a mid-country or backcountry recreation setting. Given the sensitivity of ecological and/or First Nation's values, visitation is carefully and actively managed through direct and indirect management strategies. Visitor infrastructure is the minimum necessary to effectively manage the potential impacts to ecological and/or First Nation's values from visitation.



Nature-Based Outdoor Recreation Zone:

This zone conserves one or more regionally significant nature-based outdoor recreation features and/or provides regionally valued outdoor recreation opportunities across front-country and mid-country settings. It may accommodate a range of visitation levels—from low to high—and includes infrastructure and amenities necessary to facilitate and manage the intended visitor experiences. Visitation is carefully managed using a combination of direct and indirect strategies to protect the quality of both the environment and the visitor experience. This zone is not appropriate in areas where unique, threatened, or endangered natural or First Nations values, systems, or processes are present.



Access and Services Zone:

This zone provides a focused area for infrastructure that supports park access, learning, and site operations. While modifications to the land are permitted and expected, management efforts aim to minimize disturbance to natural features wherever possible. This zone is not suitable for areas containing unique, threatened, or endangered natural or cultural features, systems, or processes.

Legend

--- Park Boundary

Management Zones

 **Protection Zone**

 **Natural Environment Zone**

 **Nature-Based Outdoor Recreation Zone:**

 **Access and Services Zone**

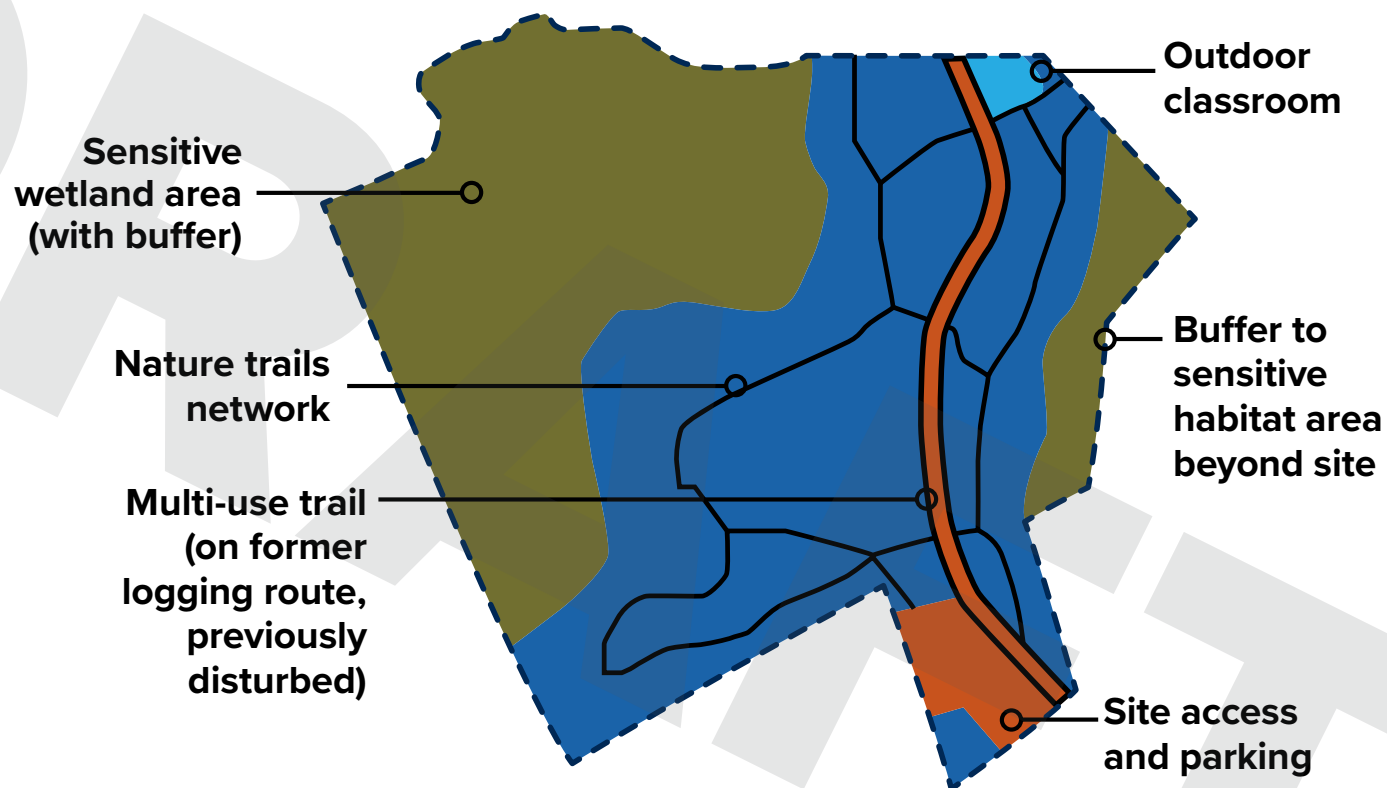


Figure 18: Example of Hypothetical Management Zone Map



5.5 MANAGEMENT PLANS

The classification and zoning systems along with park development plans will provide adequate management direction for most regional parks and trails, however, some sites are more complex and may require the preparation of a site-specific management plan. As per the actions and strategies of this strategy, the RDCK will work to develop management plans for regional parks as needed. Additionally, other parks and regional trails within the system may require more detailed planning and therefore be determined to require a management plan.

Importance of Management Plans

Management plans are essential tools for implementing the goals of the regional parks system at the site level. They provide detailed direction about how and where the regional parks and trails goals will be delivered in individual parks.

When They're Needed

Regional Park or Regional Trail management Plans may be required when individual parks or trails contain a combination of the following characteristics:

- Complex ecological values and processes.
- First Nations values, including culturally or spiritually sensitive areas and traditional uses.
- Multiple overlapping and potentially conflicting outdoor recreation activities.
- High volumes of visitation.
- Growing visitor impacts and conflicts.
- Public safety risks or hazards.
- Onsite revenue generation and/or permitting.
- Major infrastructure that is approaching the end of its lifecycle.

Process and Elements of a Management Plan

Developed collaboratively with First Nations, interested parties and residents, management plans will be developed in accordance with the **Visitor Use Management Framework** planning process. Core elements of management plans will include:

- Purpose of the Management Plan
- Planning and Engagement Process
- Park Values (Ecological, First Nations, Recreational, Land Uses)
- Park Visitation
- Summary of Management Issues
- Desired Conditions and Indicators, Targets, Thresholds
- Appropriate Activities, Infrastructure, Amenities and Services
- Management Zoning
- Management Strategies and Actions
- Monitoring and Implementation [



Image Source: RDCK

6

SERVICE MODEL



After more than five decades of acquiring parkland and establishing regional parks and trails, the RDCK is at a transition point. The system has grown into a significant portfolio of lands that protect biodiversity, provide recreation opportunities, and support cultural and heritage values. However, the current service and governance framework does not fully reflect the regional significance of many assets. Funding remains tied to local service areas, resulting in uneven service levels, deferred maintenance, and missed opportunities to deliver system-wide benefits.

The RDCK may wish to envision a new model. In line with regional district models across British Columbia the RDCK should engage in a process that clearly distinguishes between regional and sub-regional services, ensures equitable funding across the RDCK, and provides consistent, transparent standards for park delivery.

This section outlines the key elements of the proposed service and governance model and how the shift will be operationalized.

6.1 SERVICE DEFINITION

The RDCK Regional Parks, Trails, and Water Access Service currently operates across a diverse system of parks, trails, and water access sites that vary in function, scale, and significance. This Strategy recommends further investigation and engagement to better define and understand regional and sub-regional service delivery within the RDCK context. This work will support informed decision-making about future governance, funding, and service alignment and ensure that any changes reflect community values, operational realities, and fiscal responsibility. The classification system outlined in Section 5 provides an important foundation for this work by clarifying the primary purpose and visitor experience of different park, trail, and water access types. However, classification alone does not determine service delivery, taxation, or governance. These considerations require additional review and dialogue.

As per the recommendation in section 4.12.1 The RDCK may wish to consider the following categories to define the types of parklands within the system.

1. Regional
2. Sub-Regional
3. Community

To better understand the different categories of parklands the table on the following page outlines the defining features of the three types of parklands.

Table 6: RDCK Parkland Spectrum Comparison Table

Park Characteristic	Regional	Sub-Regional	Community
Funding and Governance	Funded and managed as a regional service through RDCK taxation and governance.	May involve shared responsibility between RDCK, partners, and local governments.	Typically funded and managed by municipalities or defined portion of electoral areas.
Primary Role and Significance	Protect and provide access to regionally significant natural, cultural, or recreation assets that serve the broader RDCK.	Serve multiple nearby communities or a defined sub-region by providing specialized or shared recreation opportunities that exceed local capacity.	Serve local neighbourhoods by providing everyday recreation, social, and green space functions close to home.
Geographic Scale and Service Area	Region-wide service, often drawing users from across the RDCK and occasionally beyond (including visitors).	Multiple communities within a sub-region.	Single neighbourhood, village, or community.
Recreation Experience	Primarily nature-based outdoor recreation, often unstructured and immersive, with an emphasis on conservation, connection to place, and regional significance.	Purposeful and activity-focused, often supporting specific recreation uses (e.g., trail networks, water access, destination trailheads).	Broad, flexible, and multi-use, focused on informal play, social interaction, and community-based recreation.
Relationship to Conservation	High conservation importance; protects regionally significant ecosystems, habitats, landscapes, or cultural heritage.	Moderate conservation role, often balancing recreation with protection of valued landscapes or corridors.	Limited conservation role; may protect small natural features or green space.
Typical Size	Medium to large.	Medium.	Small to medium.
Statutory Establishment	Does not require referendum.	Does not require referendum.	May require referendum.

6.2 SERVICE PARTICIPATION AND FUNDING

All RDCK jurisdictions (municipalities and Electoral Areas) will participate in and contribute to the regional service type, ensuring that all residents benefit from and support the system's most significant parks, trails, and water access sites. Participation in the sub-regional service type will vary depending on local interest and needs, with service areas defined based on geographic proximity, user demand, and agreements among participating jurisdictions.

In alignment with recommendation 4.12.1 the RDCK may wish to review the taxation model to ensure equitable taxation and alignment in funding with the scope and purpose of the service. The following is an example of how the RDCK may approach taxation following the review of the service model.

Regional Service

All residents contribute to the development, operation, and maintenance of regional assets through a region-wide tax requisition. Costs will be distributed according to agreed principles of fairness and benefit, ensuring that resource-intensive parks serving the wider region receive adequate funding.

Sub-Regional Service

Participating jurisdictions will fund acquisition, operation, and maintenance of sub-regional assets through local service areas. Costs will be shared among participating partners based on negotiated agreements.

Funding

A critical element of this model is the establishment of a dedicated RDCK Land Acquisition Fund (Action 4.1.2). Annual contributions to this fund will build capacity for timely land purchases or conservation agreements when opportunities arise. By linking the Land Acquisition Fund to the equitable taxation model, the RDCK will ensure:

- Predictable and sustainable funding for new regional acquisitions.
- A fair distribution of costs across all residents who benefit from the protection of regionally significant sites.
- Greater financial readiness to act quickly when strategic opportunities for conservation or regional recreation land arise.

This financial framework is consistent with best practices across British Columbia. The jurisdictional review completed in the background report demonstrated that other regional districts (such as Metro Vancouver, the CRD, RDCO, and RDN) already operate under similar models, where system-wide regional services are funded through equitable taxation and supported by dedicated land acquisition or reserve funds. Aligning the RDCK with this provincial standard will improve transparency, enhance fairness, and ensure the system is competitive and sustainable.

- 1 Regional Service Type:** Funded through a region-wide tax requisition, distributed according to principles of fairness and benefit.
- 2 Sub-Regional Service Type:** Funded through participating local service areas, with cost-sharing based on negotiated agreements.
- 3 Capital vs. Operations:** Separate allocation of funds for land acquisition and capital development versus ongoing operations and maintenance.
- 4 External Revenue:** Continued pursuit of grants, partnerships, and cost recovery (e.g., camping fees, permits, special events).



Figure 19: Financial Framework

6.3 PARTNERSHIPS AND COLLABORATIVE SERVICE DELIVERY

Partnerships are essential to the long-term sustainability of the regional system. Across the RDCK, many parks, trails, recreation amenities, stewardship initiatives, and outdoor programs are supported through the efforts of community organizations, trail associations, stewardship groups, volunteers, Indigenous communities, service clubs, local governments, tourism organizations, and other partners. These partnerships contribute significant value to the regional system by leveraging volunteer capacity, local knowledge, funding opportunities, stewardship expertise, and community leadership.

As the regional system continues to evolve, there is a growing need for greater clarity, consistency, and coordination regarding how the RDCK works collaboratively with external organizations and community partners. The RDCK will work towards developing a framework for partnership agreements and collaborative service delivery that supports accountability, risk management, operational sustainability, and long-term stewardship outcomes while continuing to enable community leadership and volunteer involvement. Depending on the nature and complexity of the partnership, the RDCK may use Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs), stewardship agreements, maintenance agreements, operating agreements, licence agreements, or other formal partnership contracts to clarify expectations and responsibilities.



Image Source: RDCK

6.4 SYSTEM GOVERNANCE

A revised governance framework will provide clear roles and decision-making structures:

- **RDCK Board of Directors Authority:** The RDCK Board would hold ultimate authority for regional service decisions, supported by amended bylaws that define the purpose, scope, and criteria for regional versus sub-regional assets (Action 4.12.1).
- **Advisory Committees/Commissions:** Existing park commissions and committees would continue to play a role at the sub-regional service type, advising on local needs and priorities.
- **Regional Advisory Structure:** A region-wide advisory mechanism (e.g., a Regional Parks and Trails Advisory Committee) may be established to ensure broad input into regional decisions, provide consistency across sub-regional commissions, and embed partnerships with First Nations, stakeholders, and the public.



Image Source: RDCK

6.5 SERVICE DELIVERY

The RDCK Regional Parks and Trails System has grown substantially over the past five decades, now encompassing twenty-four regional parks, three regional trails, and numerous water access points spread across more than 648 hectares and nearly 100 kilometres of trails.

Despite this growth, the current departmental staffing levels are low in comparison, with only four full-time and three seasonal staff currently responsible for the entire system (Figure 19).

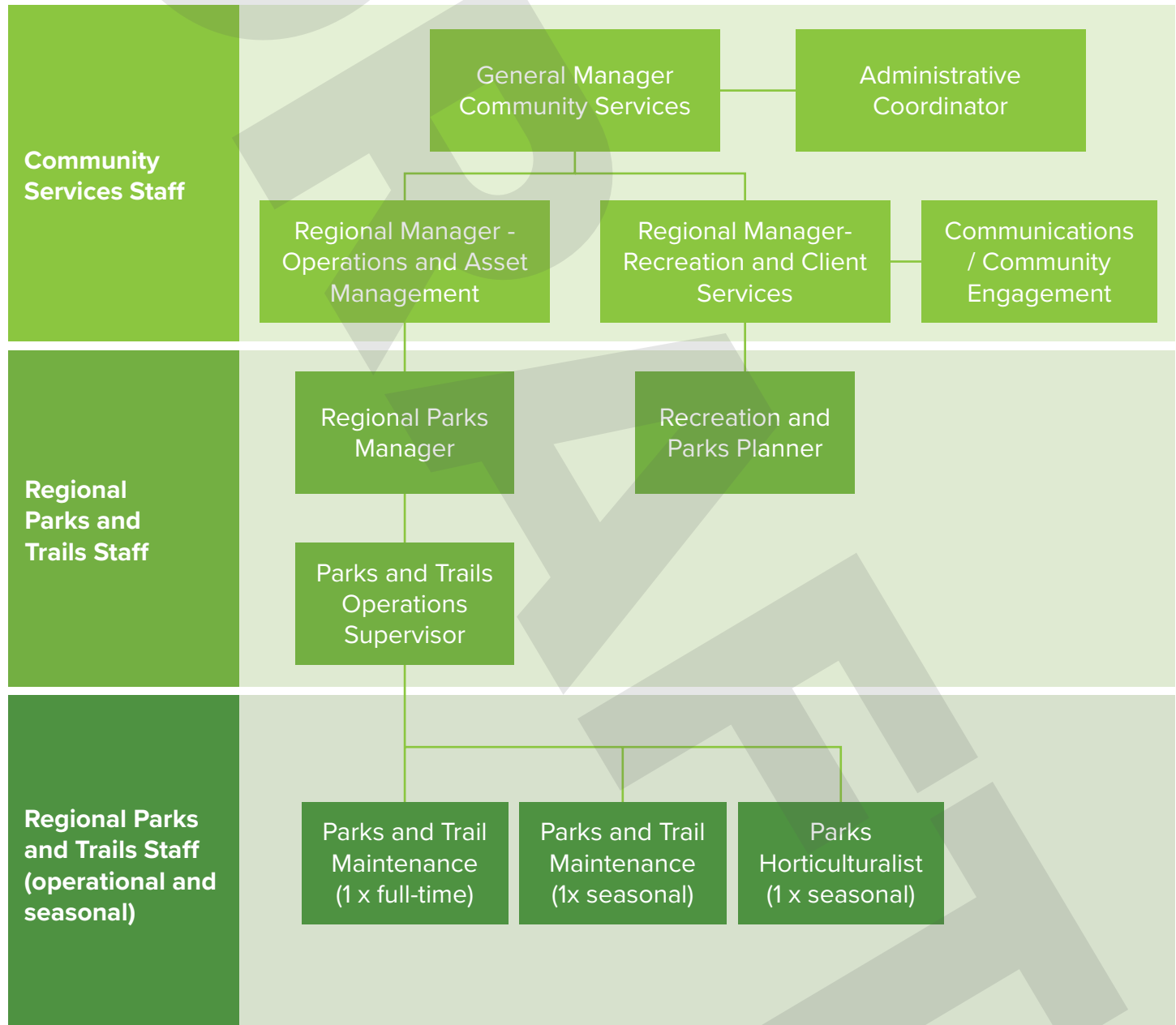


Figure 20: Staff Structure

The system growth without capacity growth has resulted in deferred maintenance, inconsistent service levels, limited ability to develop new sites, and reduced capacity to respond to emerging community needs. Based on the detailed background review there are 11 key service areas. These identified services are critical to meeting the needs of RDCK residents and ensuring the regional parks and trails system is sustainable. The following table (Table 7) highlights these essential services and outlines the current deficiencies based on the current staffing levels. Based on current staffing levels 20 out of 34 key services are being supported. However, it is important to note that some of these are only being partially supported, and others are supported through external contracts or other RDCK staffing capacity (e.g. Campground Operations is an external contract). This analysis demonstrates how the department may struggle to meet adequate service levels, indicating there are key service functions that are underserved due to staffing limitations.

Table 7: RDCK Regional Parks and Trails System Service Areas

Operations & Maintenance	Contract Management
	Park Operations & Maintenance
	Trail Construction
	Campground Operations
Planning and Design	Engineering and Design Services
	Park Standards & Park Inventory
	Strategic/Systems Planning
	Technical Services
Land and Tenures	Management Plans
	Land Acquisition
	Tenures, Permits and Approvals
	Community Development
Community Engagement	Communications and Public Relations
	First Nations Relationships
	Asset Management
	Budgeting
Budgeting, Funding and Asset Management	Grants and Other Revenues
	Development Projects (Small)
	Development Project (Large)
	Website and Social Media
Promotions and Mapping	Mapping
	Park Signage
	Recreation and Nature Based Programming
	Visitor Services
Visitor Experiences and Opportunities	Visitor Safety
	Special Events and Park Use Permits
	Interagency Relations
	Stakeholder Services
Volunteer Support and Community Partnerships	Volunteer Coordination
	Natural Resource Management
	Patrols and User Compliance (Regulations)
	Commission/Committee Coordination
Land Use and Activity Management	Commission/Committee Liaison
	Policy Development
Governance	

Based on this analysis the following table (Table 8) outlines how the RDCK's core service functions, ranging from operations and maintenance to visitor experience, community partnerships, and governance, are currently supported, and provides realistic recommendations for how these functions can be advanced under the new staffing model.

Table 8: RDCK Regional Parks and Trails Service Core Functions and Service Areas

Core Function	Key Service Areas	Current Delivery Status	Recommendations
Operations and Maintenance	Park operations and maintenance; Trail construction; Campground operations; Contract Management.	Partially supported.	Strengthen coordination of day-to-day operations, asset inspections, and field delivery. Continue to utilize a mix of internal capacity, contractors, campground hosts, and partner organizations to support maintenance and trail upkeep.
Planning and Design	Engineering/ design services; Park standards and inventory; Strategic/ system planning; Management plans; Technical Services.	Partially supported.	Enhance capacity for asset inventory, planning, and system-level decision-making. Continue to use consultants for specialized design and engineering. Prioritize management plan updates for high-use and high-priority regional assets.
Land Acquisition and Tenures	Land acquisition; Tenures, permits and approvals.	Partially supported.	Strengthen coordination of land acquisition and tenure processes, aligned with the Land Acquisition Fund. Pursue shared acquisitions with BC Parks Foundation, Nature Conservancy, or First Nations.
Community Engagement and Partnerships	Community development; Communications/ PR; First Nations Relationships.	Partially supported.	Expand community engagement and strengthen relationships with First Nations. Enhance communications and continue to build and expand partnerships with trail societies, stewardship groups, and schools for programming, education, and cultural interpretation.
Volunteer Support and Community Partnerships	Special Events and Park Use Permits; Interagency Relations; Stakeholder Services; Volunteer Coordination.		Strengthen volunteer coordination and community partnerships to support stewardship, events, and site-level initiatives. Establish a "Friends of RDCK Parks" program to formalize volunteer contributions. Strengthen interagency coordination (e.g., BC Parks, municipalities, NGOs) through partnership agreements rather than relying solely on staff delivery.
Budgets, Funding and Asset Management	Budgeting; Grants and revenues; Asset management.	Partially supported.	Improve asset management practices, including condition assessments and lifecycle planning. Seek grants for staffing multipliers (e.g., Canada Summer Jobs for seasonal crew). Expand fee-based revenue (camping, permits) to offset costs.

Core Function	Key Service Areas	Current Delivery Status	Recommendations
Development and Capital Projects	Development Projects (Small) Development Project (Large).	Unsupported.	Continue to contract out large-scale engineering/design. Seek cost-sharing with municipalities, First Nations, and NGOs for major capital builds. Seasonal staff and volunteers (Friends of RDCK Parks) can assist with lighter projects.
Visitor Experiences and Programming	Visitor services; Visitor safety; Recreation & nature-based programming; Special events and park use permits.	Partially supported.	Consider pilot of a seasonal park ranger program for high-use parks (visitor education + compliance). Partner with Kootenay Nature Centre, RAD Society, schools, and tourism operators for program delivery.
Promotion and Mapping	Website/social media; Mapping; Park signage.	Partially supported.	Improve online communications via existing RDCK channels. Prioritize signage upgrades through partnerships with local tourism organization and First Nations (interpretive/cultural signage).
Governance and Policy	Commission/committee liaison; Policy development; Overall system governance.	Partially supported.	Strengthen governance and policy coordination to support consistent decision-making across the system. Use regional/sub-regional service types to clarify roles and responsibilities.
Land Use and Activity Management	Natural Resource Management; Patrols and User Compliance (Regulations).	Unsupported.	Consider a pilot of a seasonal park ranger for high-use parks (visitor education and compliance). Coordinate with Kootenay Conservation Program, stewardship NGOs, and volunteer events for restoration.

6.6 SERVICE LEVELS

Park classification alone does not determine how a park is managed or maintained. While classification frameworks define the primary role and function of parks (e.g., recreation, conservation, waterfront), operational practices are guided by a separate and less formalized gradient of management intensity or service level. Not all parks, trails, and water access sites require the same level of maintenance or infrastructure, even within the same classification. Based on the management recommendation 14.4 the following service levels will be considered for use across the RDCK.

Table 9: Service Levels

Level of Service	Description	Characteristics	Typical Applications
Level A: High Service	Areas that are highly used, highly visible, and support a broad range of recreational activities.	- Frequent and scheduled maintenance (weekly to daily during peak periods). - Developed infrastructure (parking, washrooms, signage, formalized access points). - Regular garbage collection and site inspections. - Maintenance focused on cleanliness, safety, and user experience.	- Primary trailheads. - Developed day-use areas. - Regional destination parks. - High-use water access site
Level B: Moderate Service	Areas that support recreation with a moderate level of infrastructure and maintenance.	- Periodic, scheduled maintenance and inspections - Basic infrastructure (trails, signage, limited amenities). - Less frequent garbage collection. - Maintenance focused on functionality and safety.	- Secondary trails. - Dispersed recreation areas. - Linear trail corridors. - Moderate-use water access points.
Level C: Low Service	Areas managed with minimal intervention, where ecological conditions and low-intensity use are prioritized.	- Infrequent or reactive maintenance. - Limited or no built infrastructure. - Minimal or no garbage collection. - Natural processes prioritized over aesthetic maintenance	- Conservation areas. - Remote or low-access sites. - Environmentally sensitive areas. - Backcountry trails and water access points

6.7 Project, Asset, and Investment Prioritization Framework

The RDCK recognizes that available funding, staff capacity, partnership opportunities, and operational resources will not always allow for all desirable projects, acquisitions, improvements, or initiatives to proceed at the same time. As the system continues to grow, there is increasing competition for limited resources and investment. To support transparent, consistent, and evidence-informed decision-making, the RDCK may use the following Project, Asset, and Investment Prioritization Framework when evaluating multiple opportunities competing for RDCK support. The framework may be used to evaluate a broad range of opportunities including land acquisitions, park and trail development projects, water access improvements, partnership proposals, restoration initiatives, capital investments, major maintenance projects, asset renewal projects, and requests for RDCK funding or operational support. The framework is intended to support decision-making and prioritization and may be adapted to Regional Commission needs. It does not replace professional judgement, Board decision-making, community engagement, or technical review processes.

Scoring System

- 3 points = Strongly supports criterion
- 2 points = Moderately supports criterion
- 1 point = Limited support for criterion
- 0 points = Does not support criterion or presents significant concerns

Projects with higher overall scores should generally receive higher priority for RDCK investment and support. However, final decisions should also consider timing, funding availability, partnership opportunities, regulatory requirements, emerging issues, and Board direction.

The framework may also be used to help guide decisions regarding reinvestment, renewal, repurposing, relocation, service level adjustments, and decommissioning of existing assets. In situations where infrastructure is repeatedly damaged, exposed to increasing climate-related hazards, no longer meets community needs, or creates unsustainable operational obligations, the framework can help support transparent and defensible decisions regarding future investment priorities, long-term asset sustainability, decommissioning, and managed retreat.

Table 10: Project, Asset, and Investment Prioritization Framework

Criteria	3 Points	2 Points	1 Point	0 Points
Strategic Alignment	Strongly advances multiple goals, recommendations, and priorities identified in the PTWAS.	Supports at least one major goal or recommendation.	Limited alignment with Strategy priorities.	Does not align with Strategy priorities.
Community Need and Benefit	Addresses a clearly demonstrated regional need or service gap and provides substantial public benefit.	Addresses a moderate community need or provides moderate benefit.	Addresses a localized or limited need.	Limited public benefit or need demonstrated.
Regional Significance	Serves multiple communities, supports regional connectivity, or provides regionally significant recreation, conservation, or water access benefits.	Serves a sub-regional area or multiple user groups.	Primarily serves a local area or specific user group.	Limited regional or community significance.
Operational Feasibility	Can be supported within existing staffing, operational capacity, and maintenance resources.	Requires minor increases in operational resources.	Requires significant new staffing, maintenance, or operational commitments.	Operational requirements are currently not feasible.
Financial Sustainability	Low lifecycle cost and strong long-term financial sustainability.	Moderate lifecycle and operational costs.	High lifecycle costs or uncertain long-term sustainability.	Costs are likely prohibitive or unsustainable.
Partnership and Funding Opportunities	Significant partner contributions, grants, volunteer capacity, or external funding secured or highly likely.	Moderate partnership or funding opportunities identified.	Limited partnership or funding opportunities available.	No partnership or funding opportunities identified.
Environmental and Cultural Considerations	Provides significant environmental, stewardship, conservation, cultural heritage, or Indigenous partnership benefits.	Provides moderate environmental or cultural benefits.	Minimal environmental or cultural benefit.	Potential negative impacts or unresolved concerns.
Climate Resilience and Risk	Low climate vulnerability and contributes to long-term resilience.	Moderate climate risk that can be reasonably mitigated.	High climate vulnerability requiring significant mitigation.	Significant unresolved climate or hazard risk.
Equity and Access	Significantly improves accessibility, inclusion, geographic distribution, or underserved populations.	Improves access for some users or communities.	Limited accessibility or equity benefits.	Does not improve access or may create barriers.
Asset Sustainability	Supports long-term sustainability, reduces future liabilities, and aligns with asset management objectives.	Generally sustainable with manageable future obligations.	Creates notable future maintenance or replacement obligations.	Creates significant long-term liabilities or is unlikely to be sustainable.

7

PERFORMANCE MEASURES (MONITORING AND REPORTING)



Performance monitoring and reporting are essential for ensuring accountability, identifying what is working (and what is not), and supporting informed, evidence-based decision-making.

The RDCK is committed to advancing the goals of this strategy and to regularly monitoring our progress towards achieving our vision. To track progress toward our vision and promote transparency, the Regional District will monitor and report on the indicators presented in Table 10.

7.1 MONITORING REPORT

The RDCK will prepare and release a monitoring report every 5 years (Table 10). The report will provide both an update on the implementation of the strategic priorities and actions within this strategy and our progress towards achieving the goals and vision outlines in this strategy. Additionally, the RDCK will review goals, strategies, and actions on an annual basis to better inform the formal five-year report.

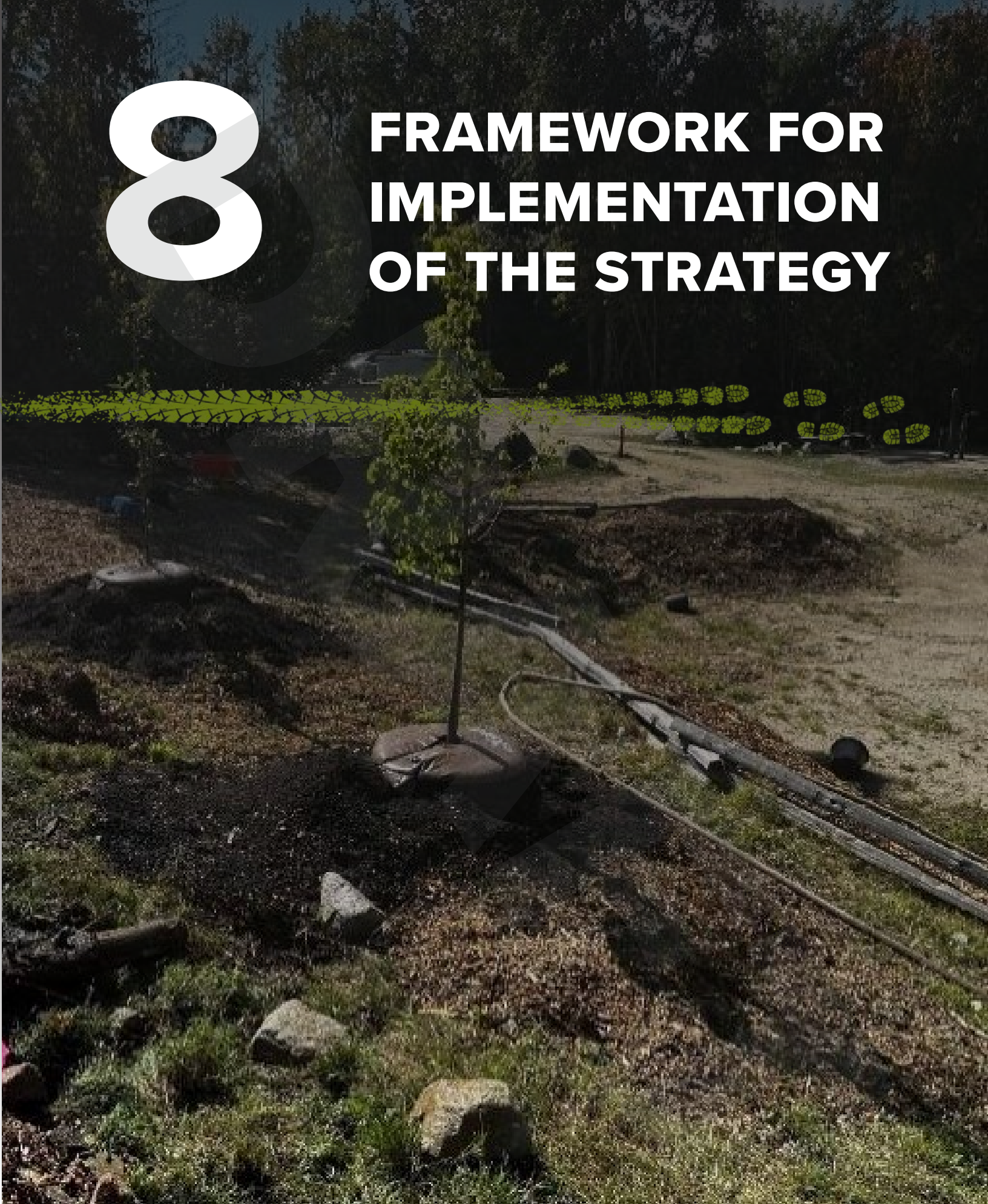
Table 11: Five Year Monitoring Matrix

Goal	Linked Strategy and Action Areas	Indicators
Provide Outstanding Nature-Based Recreation Opportunities 	- Strengthen Outdoor Recreation & Visitor Experience (amenities, programming, digital tools). - Expand & Enhance Regional Trail Connectivity (framework, trailheads, standards). - Stewardship, Interpretation & Environmental Education (program delivery). - Signage, Branding & Wayfinding (visitor readiness).	- Total visits to regional parks/trails; % of visitors satisfied with experience. - Provide 5-year trends of visitation and visitor satisfaction through the use of a household survey. - Number of programs/events delivered; participation counts (incl. youth/adaptive). - Number of amenities upgraded to current accessibility & safety standards (e.g., trailheads, toilets, parking, etc.). - Number of incidents/conflicts recorded; compliance with use zones. - Percentage of (%) regional trails meeting adopted design and maintenance standards.
Enhance Access to Regional Parks and Trails 	- Improve Balanced (Equitable) Access (land acquisition process; fund; gap closure). - Increase & Enhance Water Access (inventory; strategy; maintenance). - Expand & Enhance Regional Trail Connectivity (priority links). - Establish Regional/Sub-Regional System & Classification.	- Number of new/secured sites or partnerships. - Priority gaps in the system addressed. - Percentage (%) of residents within 30 minutes to a regional park/trail (report baseline and change). - Km of regional trail added or upgraded. - Priority connections advanced. - Water Access Site strategy completed, and water access points are better maintained/improved. - Increase number of shoreline stewardship activations. - Wayfinding/signage installs at priority access points.

Goal	Linked Strategy and Action Areas	Indicators
Advance Inclusion, Equity, and Welcoming Experiences Across Regional Parks and Trails 	• Inclusion, Equity & Accessibility Standards (EDI lens; accessibility guidelines; assessments). • Reconciliation (co-development, Ethical Spaces, language/place names). • Signage/Branding/Wayfinding (inclusive, co-developed content). • Stewardship & Environmental Education (inclusive programming).	• Number of sites assessed for accessibility. • Universal design improvements completed (where needed and feasible). • Increase the number of adaptive/accessible recreation opportunities/participation. • Inclusion of universal design guideline applications in capital projects. • Increased number of co-developed cultural interpretation/signage elements with First Nations. • Increase in the number of partnerships with equity-serving organizations. • Investigate and implement transit access pilots.
Protect and Steward Regionally Significant Natural and Cultural Areas 	• Protect & Conserve Ecologically Significant Lands (prioritization, restoration, visitor use management). • Climate Resilience & Hazard Preparedness (vulnerability, adaptation). • Stewardship & Environmental Education (volunteer initiatives).	• Number of ha protected or restored/enhanced. • Number of priority conservation acquisitions/agreements advanced. • Number of sites with active visitor-use management measures (e.g., seasonal closures, domestic pet management). • Increase in the number of stewardship events, environmental education programming, and volunteer hours.
Strengthen Community and Regional Partnerships 	• Reconciliation (co management; Indigenous led programming). • Regional & Community Partnerships (MOUs, shared delivery). • Water Access & Trails (stewardship partnerships; inter jurisdictional coordination). • Stewardship & Environmental Education.	• Increase in the number of formal partnership agreements and MOUs with First Nations. • Increase in the number of joint funding applications. • Increase in the number of Indigenous-led programs/events. • Increase in the number of volunteer initiatives and hours. • Partner satisfaction snapshot survey. • Increase in funding leveraged from grants/partners per RDCK dollars invested.
Ensure Operational Excellence and Fiscal Responsibility 	• Operational Capacity & Asset Management (inventory; staffing; lifecycle; funding ratios). • Establish Regional/Sub-Regional System & Classification (service standards). • Monitor, Evaluate & Adapt (annual review process).	• Percentage (%) of assets in inventory with asset condition ratings; facility condition index (FCI) trend. • Number of resource management plans updated/created. • Percentage (%) assets with current RMPs. • Annual progress report delivered (on time, complete).

8

FRAMEWORK FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF THE STRATEGY





The RDCK Regional Parks Program operates within a dynamic environment, where community needs, environmental conditions, and funding opportunities continue to evolve. As such, responding to the recommendations in this strategy will be imperative, responsive, and aligned with ongoing monitoring and evaluation.

8.1 ROADMAP FOR THE NEXT 10 YEARS

The following table identifies the priorities required to implement the recommendations in this strategy. Activities and initiatives are organized by strategic focus area and aligned with the goals outlined in the strategy.



Image Source: RDCK



Parks, Trails and Water Access Development

Actions	Goals	Timeframe:	Priority	Costs/Funding Implications:	Delivery Approach:
Improve and formalize access at priority water access sites.	     	Short-Term (1–5 years)	High	Moderate (site upgrades, infrastructure).	Project-based delivery with partners.
Develop and apply a water access classification and prioritization framework.	     	Short-Term (1–5 years)	High	Moderate (planning, mapping, stakeholder engagement; potential consultant support).	Integrated planning and technical analysis.
Develop and adopt a Regional Trails Framework that maps existing routes, identifies priority connections, integrates tourism opportunities, and establishes design and maintenance standards.	     	Short-Term (1–5 years)	High	Moderate (planning, mapping, stakeholder engagement; potential consultant support).	Partnership-based planning with municipalities, First Nations, and trail organizations; supported by technical analysis.
Enhance trail connectivity and address priority gaps in the network.	     	Medium-Term (5–10 years)	High	Moderate–High (capital development).	Partnership-based delivery.
Undertake site improvements aligned with Level of Service classifications.	     	Ongoing	Medium	Moderate–High (capital + lifecycle investment).	Phased capital improvements.
Assess and address gaps in parks, trails, and water access distribution across sub-regions.	     	Medium-Term (5–10 years)	High	Low (analysis) leading to Moderate–High (future capital).	System-level planning and analysis.



Land Acquisition and System Expansion

Actions	Goals	Timeframe:	Priority	Costs/Funding Implications:	Delivery Approach:
Adopt the strategic approach to land acquisition aligned with system priorities outlined in this Strategy.		Short-Term (1–5 years)	High	Low–Moderate (planning and strategy development).	Internal coordination and partnerships.
Pursue acquisition and tenure opportunities to expand parks, trails, and water access areas.		Ongoing	High	High (land acquisition; partnership funding required).	Partnerships with First Nations, NGOs, and agencies.
Identify and secure new water access opportunities in priority areas.		Medium-Term (5–10 years)	High	Moderate–High (land, tenure, site development).	Partnership-based acquisition and tenure strategies.

Conservation and Stewardship

Actions	Goals	Timeframe:	Priority	Costs/Funding Implications:	Delivery Approach:
Protect environmentally sensitive areas through classification and management approaches.		Immediate (0–2 years)	High	Low.	Integrated into planning and operations.
Implement restoration and stewardship initiatives in priority areas.		Ongoing	Medium	Low–Moderate (partnership-driven).	Partnerships with stewardship organizations.



Visitor Experience and Education

Actions	Goals	Timeframe:	Priority	Costs/Funding Implications:	Delivery Approach:
Evaluate signage, wayfinding, and information across the system.	              	Short-Term (1–5 years)	Medium	Moderate (signage and design updates).	Coordinated program delivery.
Expand education and stewardship messaging to support appropriate use.	           	Ongoing	Medium	Low.	Partnerships and communications.

Partnerships and Community Engagement

Actions	Goals	Timeframe:	Priority	Costs/Funding Implications:	Delivery Approach:
Evaluate signage, wayfinding, and information across the system.	           	Ongoing	High	Low (relationship-based).	Government-to-government collaboration.
Expand education and stewardship messaging to support appropriate use.	           	Ongoing	High	Low.	Ongoing engagement and agreements.



Governance and Service Framework

Actions	Goals	Timeframe:	Priority	Costs/Funding Implications:	Delivery Approach:
Undertake a detailed service delivery and governance review to evaluate options for implementing Regional and Sub- Regional Park, trail, and water access services, including funding and taxation models.	     	Immediate (0–2 years)	High	Moderate (analysis, financial and legal review; potential consultant support).	Internal process supported by external expertise in governance, finance, and service delivery models.
Engage with Electoral Areas, municipalities, and First Nations to explore service delivery options, funding approaches, and implications for equitable access across the region.	     	Immediate (0–2 years)	High	Moderate (engagement, facilitation, communications, potential consultant support).	Internal process supported by external expertise in governance, finance, and service delivery models, facilitated engagement (potential use of third-party facilitators).
Based on findings and engagement, refine and adopt a service framework/definition, including classification and funding/taxation approach, to support long-term implementation of the parks, trails, and water access system.	     	Immediate (0–2 years)	High	Low–Moderate (policy development; potential implementation costs).	Board decision-making supported by staff recommendations, technical analysis, and policy development.
Apply classification and Level of Service framework across all existing assets as outlined in this strategy.	     	Short-Term (1–5 years)	High	Low–Moderate (technical review, data support).	System-wide review and technical analysis.
Integrate Level of Service framework into operations, budgeting, and capital planning.	     	Short-Term (1–5 years)	High	Low (integration with existing processes).	Integration with asset management and financial planning.
Establish consistent decision-making processes for planning, investment, and management.	     	Short-Term (1–5 years)	High	Low.	Internal coordination and Board direction.



Planning and Asset Management

Actions	Goals	Timeframe:	Priority	Costs/Funding Implications:	Delivery Approach:
Update and maintain a comprehensive asset inventory and condition assessment program.	     	Immediate (0–2 years)	High	Moderate (systems, data, potential consultant support).	Internal coordination supported by technical tools.
Prioritize and update management plans for high-use and high-value sites.	     	Short-Term (1–5 years)	High	Moderate–High (consultant and staff resources).	Combination of internal work and consultant support.
Integrate asset management practices into long-term financial planning.	     	Medium-Term (5–10 years)	High	Low.	Alignment with RDCK financial processes.

Funding and Sustainability

Actions	Goals	Timeframe:	Priority	Costs/Funding Implications:	Delivery Approach:
Explore and implement sustainable funding approaches, including grants and user-based revenue where appropriate.	     	Medium-Term (5–10 years)	Medium	Low (strategy) with potential revenue generation.	Internal coordination and external funding.
Align capital and operational investment with system priorities and Level of Service.	     	Ongoing	High	Low (planning) guiding Moderate–High future investment.	Budgeting and financial planning processes.



Monitoring and Adaptive Management

Actions	Goals	Timeframe:	Priority	Costs/Funding Implications:	Delivery Approach:
Implement and operationalize the monitoring framework, including indicators and thresholds.	     	Immediate (0–2 years)	High	Moderate (program development, tools).	Integration with operations and planning.
Use monitoring and data to inform adaptive management and investment decisions.	     	Ongoing	High	Low.	Ongoing evaluation and decision-making.
Report on progress and adjust implementation priorities as needed.	     	Ongoing	High	Low.	Annual and periodic review.

DRAFT

SUPPLEMENTARY MATERIALS



TRAIL MANAGEMENT OBJECTIVE FORM

[Link](#)

BACKGROUND RESEARCH REPORT

[Link](#)

WHAT WE HEARD REPORT

[Link](#)



r⁺cs