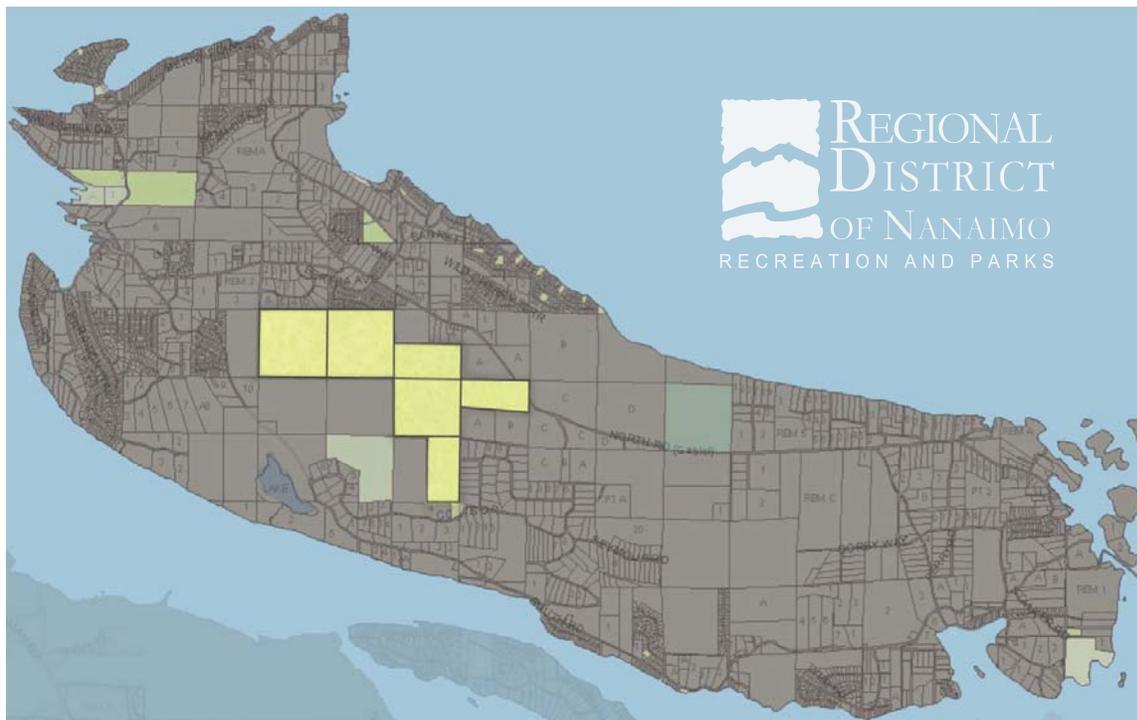


# 707 COMMUNITY PARK

2010 - 2020 Management Plan

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AUGUST 2010

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The preparation of this plan was overseen by Wendy Marshall, RDN Manager of Parks Services, Elaine McCulloch, RDN Parks Planner, and Lesya Fesiak, RDN Parks Planner. The consulting team, Kathy Dunster, Denise Cook and Wendy Farmer-O'Neil, undertook research, site assessment, stakeholder consultation and initial draft plan preparation.

The 707CP Management Plan Sub-Committee provided thoughtful input to this plan. The committee included:

Gisele Rudischer, RDN Electoral Area 'B' Director  
Deborah Ferens, Gabriola Local Trust Committee  
Jeff Thomas, Snuneymuxw First Nation  
Cheryl Boorer, Community Member  
Steve O'Neill, Community Member

Thanks are extended to the following agency staff who provided valuable input and feedback during plan development :

Chris Jackson, Regional Planning Manager, Islands Trust  
Rick Jackson, Fire Chief, Gabriola Volunteer Fire Department

Many thanks are also extended to all the residents of Gabriola Island who took the time to participate in the management planning process by attending public open house sessions, reviewing draft plans and providing feedback to project consultants and RDN staff on management goals and policies. Their commitment, passion and vision for the 707 Community Park were central to the project.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### Park Overview

The 707 Community Park (707CP) is centrally located within the western half of Gabriola Island, approximately 2km southeast of the ferry terminal. The park is composed of 6 parcels of land with a total area of 286 hectares (707 acres) – it is currently the second largest park in the Regional District of Nanaimo’s park system and the largest park on Gabriola Island.

The 707CP was created in 2005 after the Gabriola Island Local Trust Committee (LTC) approved a bylaw that permitted the transfer of 35 residential densities from 286 hectares (707 acres ) of forest-zoned lands, subsequently rezoning the land for Forestry-Wilderness Recreational use. The land was then transferred to the Regional District of Nanaimo (RDN) on a freehold basis for the purposes of Community Park use in Electoral Area “B”.

Before RDN acquisition, the 707CP lands had been actively logged since 1953, with the most extensive logging occurring from 1996-2005. Even before its designation as a community park, the 707CP provided quality passive wilderness recreation and education for both residents and visitors to Gabriola Island.

### Management Plan Purpose and Process

This document represents the first ten-year management plan for the 707CP, for the period 2010-2020. The purpose of the plan is to establish sound management direction to guide the operations, development, and stewardship of the park based on a comprehensive analysis of ecological and cultural / social values and community consultation. The plan also addresses the development of necessary covenants for conservation and preservation of the environmental values. This ten-year plan is to be reviewed after a five-year period of implementation (2015), and formally updated after a ten-year period (2020).

On June 6, 2008 the RDN secured grant funding from the UBCM Community Tourism Program to undertake a management planning process for the 707CP. In February, 2009 the 707CP Collaborative - a local collaborative of independent landscape research, planning and communications specialists - was contracted to coordinate the planning process, undertake research, consult with the community, and write the management plan for the 707CP. The creation of this plan was overseen by RDN park staff, Islands Trust planning staff and an Advisory Sub-Committee composed of two members of the community at large, a member of the Gabriola Local Trust Committee, and a member of the Snuneymuxw First Nation.

## Community Input and Feedback

The public consultation process included surveys, website updates, email and phone correspondence, open houses and presentations with stakeholders. Open houses were held on Gabriola Island on April 25-26, 2009, June 26, 2009, August 15, 2009 and June 26, 2010. The purpose of these events was to inform the public about the management plan and get feedback on the proposed policies and actions. A draft version of the Management Plan was available for public circulation and review from June 21, 2010 to July 23, 2010. Reviewers generally agreed with the goals and policies presented in the draft plan; only minor revisions were suggested in terms of park amenities and amenity design, trail expansion and trail accessibility for horse-back riders.

The idea of “minimal intervention” was the overriding theme for the management of the 707CP as derived from public consultation. Community members generally wanted to see as little development in the park as possible and as little interference as possible with the natural process of ecological succession that is currently regenerating the 707CP forest after years of logging. The community was divided on the issues of trail marker installation and horse-back riding in the park. The management plan proposes a compromise for both issues: a two-tier trail system will be implemented allowing multi-use access for cyclists, pedestrians and horses to **main trails**, which will be signed, and limited access for cyclists and pedestrians only to **side trails**, which will remain unsigned.

## Vision and Goals

The Management Plan outlines the long-term vision, management principles and goals for 707 Community Park and provides specific policies and actions for the management and stewardship of the natural, cultural and recreational features of the park. The vision statement for the 707CP reads as follows:

**In the heart of Gabriola Island, the 707 Community Park is a special wilderness recreation sanctuary providing a deep ecological and spiritual connection between humans and nature, with minimal impact to the environment.**

The following four goals form the framework for policies and management actions in the 707CP for the ten-year period of park management from 2010-2020:

- **ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION:** To preserve and protect both natural and cultural heritage values within the park by managing recreational use and allowing the natural process of ecological succession to continue with minimal intervention.
- **SENSITIVE RECREATIONAL USE:** To provide recreational opportunities that are compatible with the 707CP vision of a wilderness recreation sanctuary and that avoid conflict with park neighbours, while providing access for the whole community and creating connections with other Gabriola Island parks and trails.

- **PUBLIC SAFETY:** To create a safe environment in the 707CP for park visitors and park neighbours through hazard reduction, wildfire protection, regular park monitoring for unauthorized park uses, improved accessibility and trail signage, and increased community awareness and understanding.
- **COMMUNITY STEWARDSHIP:** To ensure active community involvement in the management, maintenance and development of the 707CP through collaborative efforts involving all stakeholders (Gabriola Island residents, Snuneymuxw First Nation, the Gabriola Local Trust Committee, the Island's Trust and the RDN), and through the development of stewardship and educational opportunities in the 707CP.

## Policies and Actions

The Plan sets out a series of Management Policies and accompanying Operational Actions that reflect the theme of the Management Goals for the 707CP while addressing all park issues summarized in section 4.0. Policies are details in section 6.0 and listed below:

- 6.1.1 Conservation Covenant:** Register a Conservation Covenant on title for the 707 CP property in order to preserve and protect the land while restricting further sale or subdivision.
- 6.1.2 Invasive Plant Management:** Implement regular monitoring and removal of invasive plant communities in the 707CP
- 6.1.3 Restoration:** Allow natural successional change to be the dominant restorative force in the 707CP.
- 6.1.4 Preservation:** Identify and preserve distinct ecological and cultural areas and features within the 707CP.
- 6.2.1 Authorized Park Uses:** Maintain existing recreational uses, and consider future recreational opportunities, that are in keeping with the community vision for the 707CP as a “wilderness recreation sanctuary” - activities that cause minimal disturbance to the park's natural and cultural resources and require little if any infrastructure.
- 6.2.2 Park Trails:** Manage the multi-use trail network to protect sensitive areas from recreational impacts while providing opportunity for safe, sustainable community recreation and cross-island active transportation.
- 6.2.3 Park Access:** Work with neighbouring property owners to develop formal access agreements for existing informal park accesses into the 707CP that are to be retained.
- 6.2.4 Park Entrances:** Designate and manage distinct access types into the 707CP to ensure public safety, avoid or reduce impacts to natural values and minimize adverse impacts on park neighbours.
- 6.2.5 Trail Wayfinding and Signage:** Develop and implement an accurate and comprehensive trail wayfinding system for the 707CP, including trail names, markers and maps, to improve park accessibility and safety.
- 6.2.6 Park Amenities:** Install park amenities at key locations throughout the 707CP that both suit and enhance the park's wilderness recreation experience.
- 6.2.7 Parking Areas:** Identify and develop parking areas inside the 707CP boundary to minimize impact to park neighbours and to provide a safe and accessible staging area for all park users, with minimal disturbance to the park's natural and cultural values.

**6.3.1 Unauthorized Uses and Vandalism:** Manage and reduce hazard risk by providing park users with information and educational opportunities explaining the impacts of vandalism and other unauthorized park uses on the cultural and ecological values of the 707CP.

**6.3.2 Fire Hazard Reduction:** Implement a fuel reduction program and regular fire risk assessments for the 707CP to reduce the risk of fire through natural processes and unauthorized park uses.

**6.3.3 Emergency Access:** Designate and maintain an emergency access route through the 707CP in collaboration with the Gabriola Volunteer Fire Department.

**6.4.1 Collaborative Management:** Manage the 707CP as an important ecological and cultural community space on Gabriola Island through collaborative efforts involving all stakeholders.

**6.4.2 Volunteer Caretaking:** Coordinate park caretaking tasks between park staff, park neighbours and the larger community of Gabriola Island to ensure regular park monitoring and maintenance, as well as continuous community involvement with the 707CP.

**6.4.3 Educational Programs:** Allow educational activities within the 707CP that are mutually beneficial to both park visitors and the park environment.

Operational Actions are summarized in the table below:

POLICY TOPIC		ACTIONS - LISTED IN ORDER OF PRIORITY	COST
<b>Environmental Protection</b>	1	Consolidate 707 parcels and register a Conservation Covenant on title.	legal costs - \$3000
	2	Implement regular monitoring and removal of invasive plants.	staff time
	3	Complete ecological assessment and develop ecosystem management strategy	labour - \$10,000
<b>Sensitive Recreational Use</b>	1	Secure formal access agreements for exiting park accesses through adjacent private properties.	staff time legal costs - \$1000
	2	Design and install a wayfinding system which includes maps at park entrances and signs along main trails.	staff time materials - \$8000
	3	Upgrade main trails to improve surfacing, drainage and accessibility through regrading and selective removal of vegetation.	materials & labour - \$10,000
	4	Construct permeable parking areas inside park and close to entrances off of main roads.	materials & labour - \$20,000
	5	Design and install benches along main trails and at viewpoints.	staff time materials - \$2000
<b>Public Safety</b>	1	Upgrade and maintain designated emergency access entrances and routes through culvert construction, regrading, selective removal of vegetation and gate installation.	materials & labour - \$20,000
	2	Implement a fuel reduction program and conduct regular fire risk assessment to reduce the risk of fire.	staff time
	3	Provide community with information regarding unauthorized park uses and vandalism through public information sessions, literature and website posting.	staff time
<b>Community Stewardship</b>	1	Implement a volunteer park stewardship program to ensure regular park monitoring and maintenance, as well as continuous community involvement.	n/a
	2	Organize public information and consultation sessions for management plan review and updates to ensure ongoing Collaborative Management.	staff time

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## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Park Context



The 707 Community Park (707CP) is centrally located within the western half of Gabriola Island, approximately 2km southeast of the ferry terminal. The park is composed of 6 parcels of land with a total area of 286 hectares (707 acres) – it is currently the second largest park in the Regional District of Nanaimo’s park system and the largest park on Gabriola Island. The Park property borders private residential lands to the north, south and southeast, private forestry lands to the west, and Federal Crown Lands to the east. The Coats Marsh Regional Park is located diagonally across from the southwest corner of the Park and two small community parks border the southeastern corner of the 707CP, connecting the park to Coats Drive.



The 707CP was created in 2005 after the Gabriola Island Local Trust Committee (LTC) approved a bylaw that permitted the transfer of 35 residential densities from 286 hectares (707 acres ) of forest-zoned lands, subsequently rezoning the land for Forestry-Wilderness Recreational use. The land was then transferred to the Regional District of Nanaimo (RDN) on a freehold basis for the purposes of Community Park use in Electoral Area “B”.



Before RDN acquisition, the 707CP lands had been actively logged since 1953, with the most extensive logging occurring from 1996-2005. From 1887-1953 the area was under the ownership of various coal mining companies, and from 1874-1887 the land was used for agriculture. Part of the Snuneymuxw First Nation’s traditional territory, the 707CP lands show remarkable recovery from a long history of human use. Composed of undeveloped second-growth forest land and pocket wetland, and occupying one of the highest points on Gabriola Island at an elevation of 140m, the park now plays a significant and evolving ecological role in the provision of wildlife habitat, groundwater receiving and shedding, and long-term carbon storage. Even before its designation as a community park, the 707CP provided quality passive wilderness recreation and education for both residents and visitors to Gabriola Island.



Because of the park’s history, location, prominence and ecological value, many Gabriolans care passionately for the 707CP. Both the tangible and intangible qualities of the park foster a sense of authentic human attachment and belonging. Each visitor to the park has a very individual experience triggered by the park’s isolation, views and expansiveness. While these factors help create the ‘spirit of place’ that is unique to the 707CP, they also represent some of the challenges associated with the creation of management policies that work to preserve and protect both recreational and environmental values as identified by individuals and the community.



Figure 1.1 707 Community Park Location

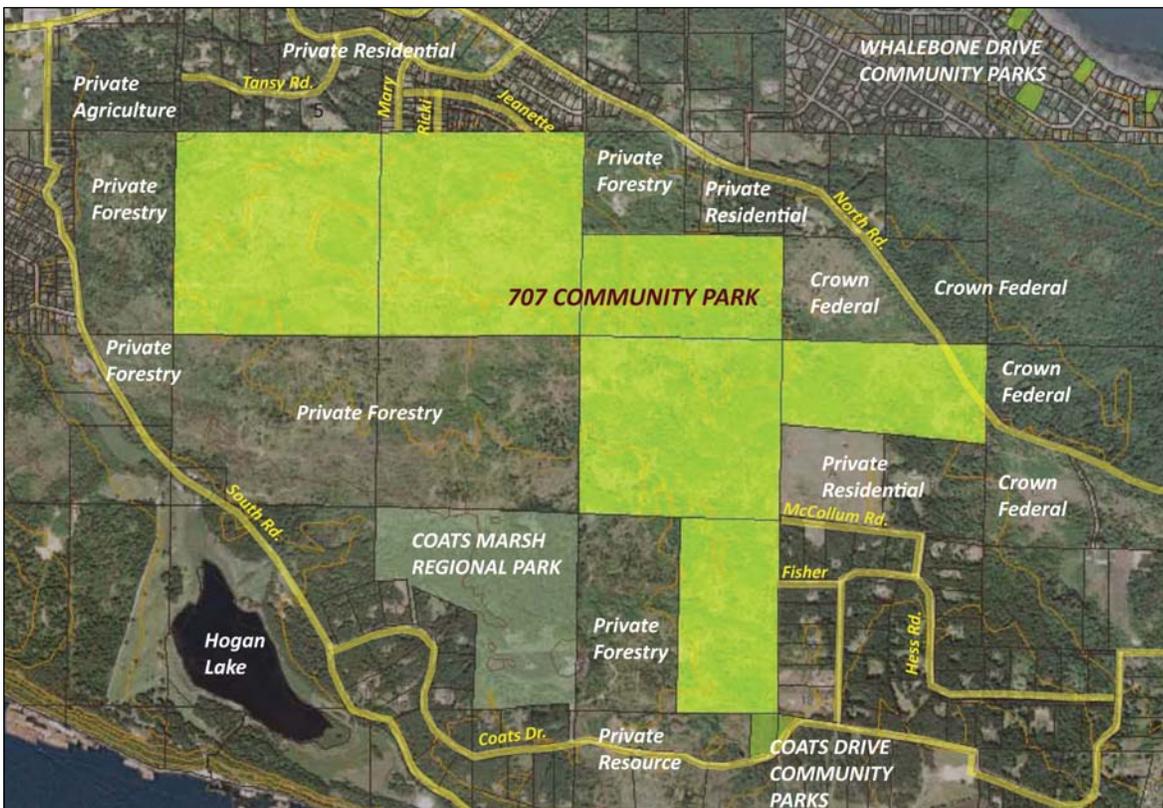


Figure 1.2 707 Community Park Context

## 1.2 Purpose of the Management Plan

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This document represents the first ten-year management plan for the 707 Community Park, for the period 2010-2020. The purpose of the plan, as identified by both the LTC and the RDN at the time of land title transfer, is to establish sound management direction to guide the operations, development, and stewardship of the park based on a comprehensive analysis of ecological and cultural/ social values and community consultation, thus ensuring its protection for the enjoyment of future generations. The current plan should also address the development of necessary covenants for conservation and preservation of the environmental values, and determine a suitable name for the park.

This ten-year plan is to be reviewed after a five-year period of implementation (2015), and formally updated after a ten-year period (2020).

## 1.3 Management Plan Structure

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The management plan has been organized into seven sections:

- **COMMUNITY CONSULTATION:**  
Summarizes the methods and results of the community consultation process.
- **BASELINE INVENTORY:**  
Provides a summary of research and site analysis pertaining to the natural and cultural values of the 707CP.
- **SUMMARY OF ISSUES:**  
Review of management issue outlined during community consultation and baseline inventory.
- **VISION, PRINCIPLES AND GOALS**  
Defines the vision and management goals developed through the process of community consultation and baseline inventory, and outlines key principles that affect park operations.
- **POLICIES AND ACTIONS**  
Addresses park management issues and identifies solutions through management policies and actions.

## 1.4 Stakeholders

The following groups representing special interest in the use and management of the 707CP were contacted throughout the planning process, from March 2009 to June 2010, with regards to public consultation events and draft plan review:

Community	Neighbouring landowners Local residents Snunemuxw First Nation Local businesses
Government	Islands Trust Gabriola Island Local Trust Committee Regional District of Nanaimo
Organization or Special Interest	Gabriola Agricultural Association Gabriola Arts Council Gabriola Astronomy Group Gabriola Island Chamber of Commerce Gabriola Commons Gabriola Cooperative Radio Society Gabriola Emergency Social Services Gabriola Fire Protection Improvement District Gabriola 4H Gabriola Historical & Museum Society Gabriola Land Conservancy Gabriola Land & Trails Trust Gabriolans for Local Food Choices Gabriola Recreation Society Gabriola Residents & Ratepayers Association Gabriola Rod, Gun & Conservation Club Gabriola Sustainability Workshop (LTC sponsored) Gabriola Transportation Association Gabriola Walking Club Gabriola Women Institute Gabriola Rescue of Wildlife Society (GROWLS) Gathering Place Youth Centre Nanaimo Field Naturalists (Xmas Bird Count) People for a Healthy Community Rollo Seniors Centre

Table 1.1 List of Stakeholders

## 1.5 Management Plan Parameters

The following plans and policies serve as a management framework for the 707 Community Park:

■ **GABRIOLA ISLAND OFFICIAL COMMUNITY PLAN**

**Gabriola Local Trust Committee**

Gabriola Island's OCP Land Use Bylaw No.177 establishes land and water use zones on the island and regulates the uses, buildings, and structures within each zone. Following the transfer of lands to the RDN in 2005, the 707CP was rezoned to Forest-Wilderness Recreation. The Gabriola Local Trust Committee, the governing body on Gabriola Island, is currently reviewing and updating the Gabriola Island OCP.

■ **ISLANDS TRUST ACT**

The Islands Trust is a federation of independent local governments, including Gabriola Island, which plans land use and regulates development in the trust area under the legislated authority of the Islands Trust Act. The Object Statement from the Islands Trust Act provides broad policy guidelines for Trust Council, the Trust Fund Board, and the Local Trust Committees regarding the management of development and the preservation and protection of the Trust Area:

*The Object of the Trust is to preserve and protect the Trust Area and its unique amenities and environment for the benefit of the residents of the Trust Area and of British Columbia generally, in cooperation with municipalities, regional districts, improvement districts, other persons and organizations and the government of British Columbia.*

■ **PARK BYLAW NO. 1399**

**Regional District of Nanaimo**

Bylaw No. 1399 establishes regulations, prohibitions, and requirements with respect to the management, maintenance, improvement, operation and use, including establishing a system of licenses, permits and approvals with or without terms and conditions, with respect to regional and community parks, trails and other land the RDN holds for the purpose of parks. Under the Bylaw, the 707CP is classified as a Level 4 Undeveloped Park.

■ **DEVELOP WITH CARE, 2006**

**BC Ministry of Environment**

Planning, siting, and managing any proposed facilities and amenities in the 707CP will follow Sections 3 and 4 of Develop with Care: Environmental Guidelines for Urban and Rural Land Development in BC to ensure environmentally valuable resources in the park will not be negatively impacted by management activities and park uses.

## 1.6 The Plan Process

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On June 6, 2008 the RDN secured grant funding from the UBCM Community Tourism Program to undertake a management planning process for the 707CP. In February, 2009 the 707CP Collaborative – a local collaborative of independent landscape research, planning and communications specialists – was contracted to coordinate the planning process, undertake research, consult with the community, and write the management plan for the 707CP. The creation of this Management Plan was overseen by RDN park staff, Islands Trust planning staff and an Advisory Sub-Committee composed of representatives from the local government, First Nations, and the Gabriola Island community.

**707CP ADVISORY SUB-COMMITTEE:**

Gisele Rudischer, RDN Electoral Area “B” Director  
Deborah Ferens, Gabriola Local Trust Committee  
Jeff Thomas, Snuneymuxw First Nation  
Cheryl Boorer, Community Member  
Steve O’Neill, Community Member  
Wendy Marshall, RDN Manager of Parks Services  
Elaine McCulloch, RDN Parks Planner  
Lesya Fesiak, RDN Parks Planner

The 707CP management planning process included the following areas of assessment and plan development:

■ **CONSULTATION:**

Community consultation guided the development of the 707CP Management Plan and was integrated into all areas of plan development including background research and baseline data, identification and analysis of park issues, trail and access identification and development, and the creation of the Vision, Goals and Policies for the management of the 707CP.

■ **BASELINE INVENTORY:**

Baseline inventory of the 707CP provided a framework for the community consultation process and informed the development of the Vision, Goals and Policies for the management of the 707CP. The baseline inventory process included site analysis of ecological, archaeological and cultural values and assessment and synthesis of property information, maps, air photos, historical records and legal documents from a variety of sources.

■ **PLAN DRAFTING AND EDITING:**

Based on public and stakeholder consultation and baseline inventory, the plan was drafted and revised with the assistance of RDN and Islands Trust staff and the Advisory Sub-Committee.

The final plan was submitted to the RDN Board for approval in August of 2010.

## 2.0 PUBLIC CONSULTATION

The planning process for the 707CP Management Plan adhered to guidelines established by both the RDN and the Islands Trust that mandate an inclusive, meaningful, transparent, clear, accurate and objective community consultation process. The consultant team employed an open, non-confrontational and respectful approach to community consultation in order to effectively listen, learn, clarify, and communicate with all members of the community with regard to all issues related to the management of the 707CP. Community Consultation events and activities are summarized in the following table:

DATE	EVENT OR ACTIVITY	PURPOSE
April 2, 2009	707 Advisory Sub-Committee Meeting	project start-up and direction for public process and plan issues
April 25 2009 April 26, 2009	Public Open House #1	park visioning workshop
June 27, 2009	Park Neighbours Focus Group	identification of issues and concerns for park neighbours
Aug.15, 2009	Community Mapping Day	inventory and location of park names, special uses and stories
Sep.12, 2009	707 Advisory Sub-Committee Meeting	presentation and feedback on 707CP Management Plan Draft #1
June 4, 2010	707 Advisory Sub-Committee Meeting	presentation and feedback on 707CP Management Plan Draft#2
June 26, 2010	Public Open House #2	presentation and feedback on final draft of 707CP Management Plan
continuous	Park Neighbour Survey	survey of park uses, issues and concerns for park neighbours
continuous	Park Naming Survey	online nominations and vote on alternative names for the 707CP
continuous	website: 707cp.ca	information posting, discussions and surveys
continuous	Islands Trust drop-box	community mail drop and information posting area
continuous	informal public consultation	707CP discussions at Farmers Market and various community events

Table 2.1 Community Consultation Activities and Events

### 2.1 Advisory Subcommittee Meetings

Minutes of the Advisory Sub-Committee Meetings held April 2, 2009, September 12, 2009 and June 4, 2010 can be found in **Appendix A: Advisory Sub-Committee Minutes**.

## 2.2 Open House #1

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Held on April 25&26, 2009 at the Gabriola Elementary School with 60 participants, the first public event set the tone for the planning process and provided guidance for the development of a management vision for the 707CP. The summary report for Open House #1 can be found in **Appendix B: Public Meetings, April 25 & 26, 2009.**

### WHAT WE LEARNED

- **MULTI-USE TRAIL ACCESS:** Participants did not see the need for separate trail networks for horses, bikes and hikers. They espoused the rural value of tolerance and were prepared to work together to share the trails and to educate their island neighbours on trail use safety.
- **DO THE MINIMUM - LET THE PARK HEAL:** There was a general feeling that nature needs to be allowed to take its course in repairing and restoring the ecosystem in the 707CP. Residents felt strongly about the use of minimal and non-invasive signage, as well as minimal trail construction, keeping the paths as natural as possible while allowing for fire and emergency access at key points.
- **SHARING THE PARK WITH FLORA AND FAUNA:** Participants felt that the park plays a vital role in providing habitat for indigenous plants and animals and that the habitats and ecosystems that are evolving in the 707CP need to be preserved and protected. There was also a strong desire to educate others on the recreational use in and protection of wilderness.
- **WATER:** There were many thoughtful, and often differing, ideas put forward about the ways in which the 707CP could be used for water storage, however, everyone agreed that the 707CP lands are vitally important to the quality and availability of water on Gabriola Island.
- **HORSE RING AND STALL SPACE:** Participants discussed ways in which equestrienne use in the park could be both accommodated and beneficial to park tourism with activities such as overnight camping and picnics. Some suggestions were given for a small horse area in the park that would be rotated to allow for regrowth and the construction of small pens or 3-wall shelters.
- **STRUCTURES - TO HAVE OR NOT TO HAVE:** Although the 707CP has been proposed as a site for wind turbines, as well as a communication tower, a majority of participants in the community consultation event felt that there should be no large-scale structures in the park. While hand-build rustic benches would be acceptable, nothing commercial or inappropriate for the wilderness setting should be allowed.
- **PARKING AND ACCESS:** Different concerns were expressed by different user groups. Neighbours felt that current access points to the 707CP draw too much traffic onto small neighbourhood streets and that main access points and parking areas should be provided along main roads. Horse enthusiasts expressed safety concerns in terms of loading and unloading horses and requested a safe hitching area. Hikers and cyclists requested trail access at both the north and south ends of the park to promote a cross-island trail system. Emergency and Fire personnel discussed the need for reliable access to the centre of the park.

- **VIEWPOINTS AND MEADOWS:** Participants enjoy and value access to the views currently available in the 707CP, one of the highest points on the island, and would like to have them maintained. Some participants also expressed interest in preserving an arbutus meadow area that is developing in the park.
- **FOOD, FIREWOOD AND FORESTRY:** Participants discussed the resource value of the 707CP and the desire to accommodate uses such as small-scale berry and mushroom picking, and kindling and firewood gathering from deadfall in the park. Some participants expressed an interest in community gardening space that would also serve as fire break in areas of the park adjacent to residential neighbourhoods, while others were interested in using a section of the park for a sustainable, managed forestry project.

## 2.3 Park Neighbour Focus Group and Survey

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Held on June 27, 2009 at the Women's Institute Hall on Gabriola, with 12 attendees and additional phone and email responses from neighbours who were not able to attend, the event was an opportunity to identify specific issue, through informal discussions and a written Park Neighbours Survey, unique to residents whose property borders the 707CP. A copy of the survey can be found in **Appendix C: 707 Community Park Neighbours Survey**.

### WHAT WE LEARNED

Most park neighbours that share an immediate boundary with the 707CP visit the park either everyday or 2 - 3 times a week. Issues of the greatest concern to drop-in session participants and survey respondents included parking along residential roads adjacent to the park (especially the blocking of access gate at Ricki Ave) and public safety in terms of hunting, motorized vehicle access, trespassing, fire and dog waste. Having lived through a decade of logging, park neighbours are passionate about preserving the park for future generations. The vast majority would like to see a management plan that focuses on letting the park heal, with minimum intervention.

## 2.4 Community Mapping Day

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Held on August 15, 2009, 12:30-6:00pm at the Women's Institute Hall on Gabriola Island, with approximately 12 participants, the Community Mapping Day was an informal drop-in session giving residents an opportunity to share memories, perspectives, stories, information and expertise about the park and its special places, for inclusion on a map and to guide the development of the management plan.

### WHAT WE LEARNED

While attendance on Community Mapping Day was low, those who dropped by contributed many stories and place names to the 707 Community Map. Trails that were thought to have no name turned out to have well-used local names that will become identifiers for the trail system. Several places in the park had more than one name, which is an indicator of the personal level of attachment community members have

to the park and to the places in the park. All of the information gathered during the community mapping sessions allowed multiple perspectives to be brought into the park planning inventory and decision-making process.

## 2.5 Open House #2

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Held on June 26, 2010 at the Women's Institute Hall with 20 attendees, the second open house was an opportunity for community members to discuss and provide direct feedback on the draft 707CP Management Plan with RDN Park staff. Community review of the draft plan was a month long process, from June 21 to July 23. A total of 20 written responses or comments were received by RDN park staff either by email or letter. A summary report for public feedback on the draft plan can be found in **Appendix D: Public Draft Plan Review, June 21 - July 23, 2010.**

### WHAT WE LEARNED

In general, feedback on the draft management plan, at the public open house, and through submitted feedback forms, email and phone conversations, was positive. Most public session attendees or mail respondents reiterated or expressed support for management plan principles and policies, the strongest support being for signage and trail markers in the park.

Aside from a few comments reflecting individual needs or concerns, there were several suggested revisions to the draft plan that were shared by a majority of respondents: the need to designate Tin Can Alley as a main trail in the 707CP (as apposed to a side trail with limited use) and the need to consult with a Professional Forester in order to assess forest conditions as the park matures (not included in first draft of plan). These suggested revisions or additions have been incorporated into the final draft of the plan.

An equal number of conflicting comments were received regarding horse-back riding in the park. Whereas some respondents suggested an outright ban on horseback riding in the park, others suggested that all trails be accessible to horses at all times. The final draft of the plan suggests a compromise by allowing horse-back riding on main trails and restricting horse access on side trails.

## 2.6 Website and Email

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A dedicated website ([www.707.cp.ca](http://www.707.cp.ca)) and email address ([707cpp@gmail.com](mailto:707cpp@gmail.com)) were created to provide easy community access and feedback on information about the 707CP management plan events and meeting minutes. While the website hosted discussion boards that were readily used by 48 registered users to post ideas, question or opinions about various topics of their choosing, email provided community members with direct and private correspondence with consultants - a total of 92 emails were received by consultants from community members with regards to the management of the 707CP. Website posting and email correspondence proved to be a valuable component to a clear and open public consultation process.

## 2.7 Park Naming

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The 707CP name was assigned to the land at the time of parkland designation and references the size of the park, which is 707 acres or 286 hectares. Although established informally as a temporary name for the park, most community members have become accustomed to the name and feel comfortable with its continued use, regardless of the park's ultimate size. Alternative park names were solicited using an open-ended process through the website discussion boards, meeting conversations, emails and suggestions left in the project mail drop-box at the Islands Trust office.

On July 1, 2009, the following park name nominations, listed in alphabetical order, were posted on the website for an on-line poll:

- **707 Acre Forest**
- **707 Acre Community Park**
- **707 Acre Wood**
- **707 Thuthiqut (meaning "707 Forest" in Island Halkomelem)**
- **707 Wilderness Reserve**
- **Central Park**
- **Gabriola Watershed Park**
- **Gaviota Park**
- **Heartlands Wilderness**
- **The Coast Salish Ridge**
- **The Salish Forest**

Community members were directly informed by email about the on-line poll. In addition, a press release was sent to Gabriola Island's two local newspapers, The Flying Shingle and The Gabriola Sounder. The website's polling tool (VIZU) instantly tabulated and displayed polling results in a bar graph. On October 25, 2009, with only 50 total votes received, the on-line poll was closed. Because there was a tie between the **Heartland Wilderness** and the **707 Acre Community Park**, a final decision was referred to the Advisory Sub-Committee.

At the final Sub-Committee meeting on June 4, 2010, the park was officially named the **707 Community Park**.

### 3.0 BASELINE INVENTORY

707CP research and site analysis findings are summarized within the following sections:

- Property and Land Status
- Cultural Heritage
- Current Park Conditions
- Opportunities

#### 3.1 Property and Land Status

The RDN holds fee simple title to the six parcels that comprise the 707CP. The Property Identification Number (PID) and Legal Description of each 707CP parcel are provided in the following table as well as referenced in the map below:

PARCEL	PID	LEGAL DESCRIPTION
1	006654843	NE 1/4, Section 13, Gabriola Island, Nanaimo District
2	006655335	NW 1/4, Section14, Gabriola Island, Nanaimo District
3	006649815	S1/2 OF NE1/4, Section 14, Gabriola Island, Nanaimo District
4	006649599	SE1/4, Section14, Gabriola Island, Nanaimo District
5	006656498	N 1/2 OF SW1/4, Section 15, Gabriola Island, Nanaimo District
6	006649408	E1/2 OF NE1/4, Section 10, Gabriola Island, Nanaimo District

Table 3.1 Legal Description and PID for 707CP Parcels



Figure 3.1 707 Community Park - Parcels and Easements

### 3.1.1 Easements

Because of previous land ownership, the RDN has existing easement over two properties that border the 707CP:

- **Easement EK142270** allows access from **707CP parcel 1** to a 244 square meter area located in the northeast corner of the private forestry land to the west of the park (PID 006-655-254, legally described as The East 1/2 of the Northwest 1/4 of section 13, Gabriola Island, Nanaimo District). This easement provides access to an undeveloped road right-of-way (Tin Can Alley) that connects the 707CP to North Rd.
- **Easement EK142283** allows blanket access from 707CP parcel 3 to the Crown Federal property to the east of the park (PID 026-319-322 legally described as Lot A Section 15 Gabriola Island, Nanaimo District).

### 3.1.2 Land Use Bylaw Zoning

The 707CP is currently zoned as **Forestry-Wilderness Recreation (FWR)**. Permitted uses for **Forestry-Wilderness Recreation** lands include: (a) forestry, (b) forest wilderness oriented recreation, (c) ecological reserves, and (d) environmental protection. Permitted structures include portable sawmills and structures to accommodate passive outdoor recreational activities, environmental protection projects, forestry and forestry research, and education.

In keeping with the conditions established when the park was created, future rezoning should see the 707CP designated for **Passive Recreation Community Park (P2)** use. Permitted uses under **Passive Recreation Community Park** zoning include: (a) passive outdoor recreational activities, including walking, hiking and nature appreciation. All buildings are prohibited under P2 zoning and only structures that accommodate passive outdoor recreational activities are allowed.

### 3.1.3 Management and Maintenance

The 707CP is managed by the RDN as an Area “B” community park. Annual operational costs associated with community park maintenance are funded under the Area “B” Community Parks Function which serves a total of 30 community parks on Gabriola Island, Mudge Island and Decourcy Island.

Currently, there is one RDN Park Planner responsible for the long term management and development of all RDN community parks (a total of 172 parks within 7 electoral areas), and two RDN Parks Technicians responsible for the daily maintenance of all RDN community and regional parks and trails (over 2,632 hectares of parkland). The Area “B” Parks and Open Space Advisory Committee, composed of 4-6 community members, provides advice and guidance to RDN staff on issues pertaining to community parks and trails.

Although a volunteer park program is currently under development for all Regional RDN parks and trails, there is already a strong spirit of community involvement and stewardship present on Gabriola Island. In the 707CP, informal way-finding markers

have been posted throughout the park by the Gabriola Land and Trails Trust, while hazards and other park issues have been noted and relayed to park staff by park neighbours.

## 3.2 Cultural Heritage

The 707CP lands are part of the Snuneymuxw First Nation's territory. The chronology of post-contact land status and human use within the 707CP lands is summarized in the following timeline:

Before 1874	Coastal Douglas Fir Forest
1874 - 1887	Agriculture land (Alexander Easson)
1887 - 1953	Coal Prospecting area (New Vancouver Coal Mining & Land Co.)
1953 - 2005	Forestry land (Various Owners)
After 2005	707 Community Park (Electoral Area "B", RDN)

### 3.2.1 Archaeological Assessment

An archaeological reconnaissance of the 707CP lands was conducted on August 22 and 23, 2009. All existing trails, as well as several accessible off-trail areas in the park were examined by way of a walking survey - no subsurface tests were undertaken. A complete archaeological assessment for the 707CP can be found in **Appendix E: 707CP Archeological Assessment Report**.

Considering the density of cultural remains or activities documented on Gabriola Island (inland shell middens, lithic scatters, isolated stone tool finds, burial cairns, camas, and/or shellfish processing pits, and petroglyphs), an occurrence of material evidence was anticipated within the 707CP. However, with the exception of some by-products of historic logging activities, no clear evidence of any of these cultural materials was documented during the walking survey. Two possible culturally modified trees (CMTs), four possible groundstone fragments, and one possible basalt core were recorded.

The high density of cultural remains on Gabriola Island and the surrounding region suggests that there may be a high likelihood of cultural materials in the 707CP, however the probability of identifying or recovering such materials is low given the poor visibility coupled with the destructive nature of recent intense logging activity. If any new development in the park is planned, such as new trails, trail realignment, trail grading or any activity requiring ground clearing or earth moving, the services of a professional archaeologist must be secured to monitor the activity during the planning and/or construction phases.

### 3.2.2 1875 First Survey of Gabriola Island

The first survey map of Gabriola Island, dated 1875, indicates that an historic trail cuts across the 707CP lands. The trail is labelled "Road to John Dick's Swamp" and is currently referred to as "Central Road" by residents. There is some likelihood that cultural deposits or isolated artifacts may be associated.



One of four possible groundstone fragments.



One possible basalt core.



One of two possible culturally modified trees.

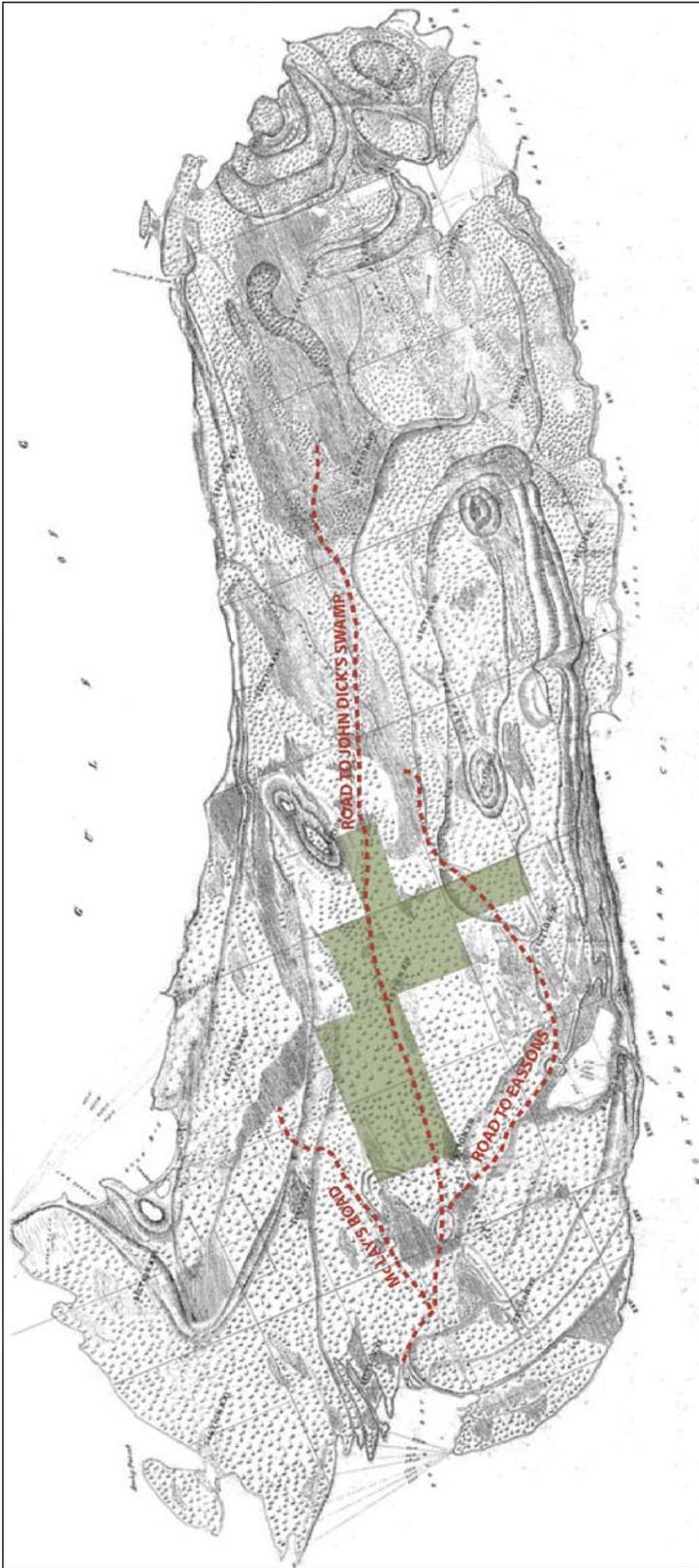


Figure 3.2 1875 Survey Map of Gabriola Island . Location of 707CP indicated in green. Historic road locations indicated in red.

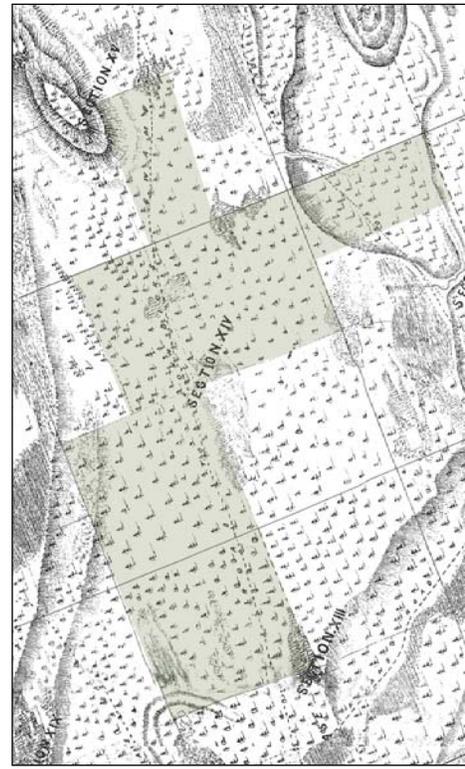


Figure 3.3 Detail of 1875 Survey Map of Gabriola Island. Location of 707CP indicated in green.

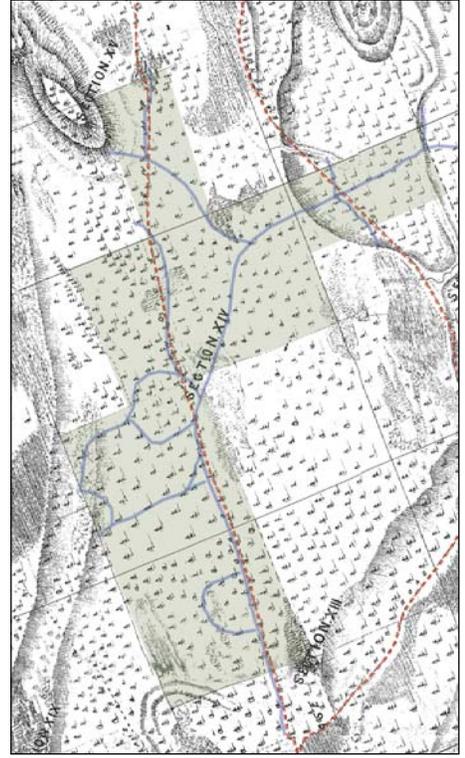


Figure 3.4 Location of existing 707CP trails (2010) indicated in blue. Location of historic Gabriola Island roads (1875) indicated in red.

### 3.3 Current Park Conditions

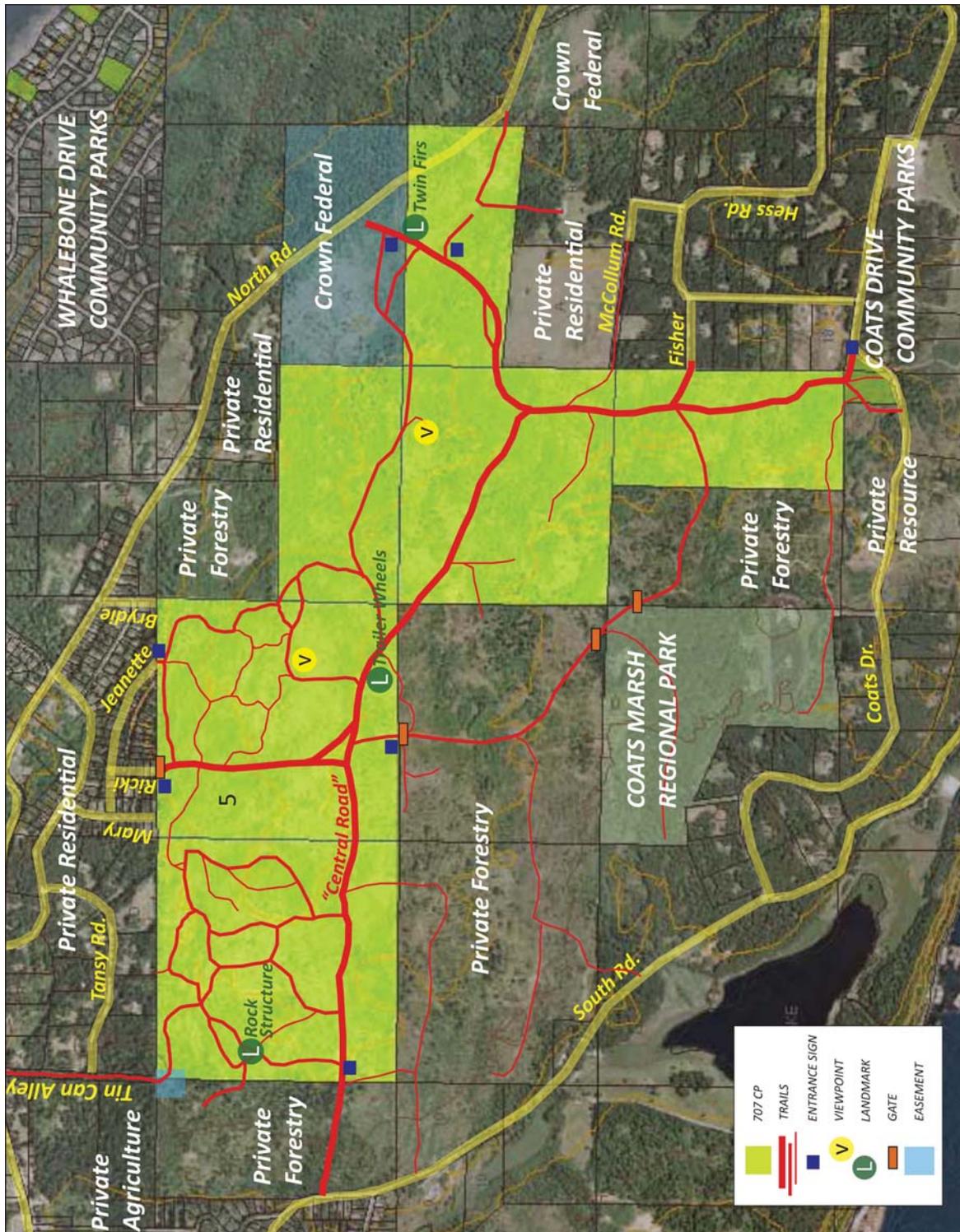


Figure 3.5 Current 707CP Conditions

### 3.3.1 Recreational Use

Although the 707CP was in private ownership before 2005, these former forestry lands were used informally by residents of Gabriola Island for a variety of activities including:



Biking in the 707CP.

- hiking
- biking
- cross-country skiing
- snow-shoeing
- children's fort building
- picnicking
- horseback riding
- dog walking
- berry and mushroom picking
- camping and campfires
- motorized vehicle use
- firewood collecting
- hunting



Walking in the 707CP.

With the exception of activities that are prohibited by the RDN Park Bylaw 1399 (camping, campfires, ATV use, firewood collecting, hunting), most of the established 707CP activities can be maintained and encouraged within the parameters of community park use established by both the RDN and the community of Gabriola Island.

There are currently no structures or recreational facilities in the 707CP.

### 3.3.2 Trails



Signs of motorized vehicle use and erosion on trails in the 707CP

The existing trail system in the 707CP follows old logging skid trails or worn human walking paths; the trail widths (which range from 1-4m) are a measure of use over many decades. Although no formal trail design or construction standards have been used, the informal multi-use trail system has accommodated walking, biking, dog-walking and horseback riding. Special user needs, such as high-pruning of trail vegetation to accommodate horseback riding, is currently done by volunteers.

Some trails are widening due to flooding and erosion, creating muddy conditions and loose surfaces. In addition, illegal use of motorized vehicles, which are entering the park through open trails, as well as getting around existing gates and ditches, has caused trail braiding, compaction and erosion, as well as noise issues for park users and neighbours.



GaLTT trail marker in the 707CP.

### 3.3.3 Way-Finding and Signage

While some community members feel that it is impossible to get lost in the 707CP, others are concerned that it is too easy to get lost and that it would be too difficult to be found or accessed during an emergency. With the exception of installed RDN community park entrance signs at Ricki Rd, Jeanette Ave, Fisher Rd and Coats Drive, signage in the 707CP is ad hoc, inconsistent and scattered -

often the directional message is unclear or misleading. The Gabriola Land and Trails Trust has posted yellow trail markers on trees, considered by different park users to be either very helpful, very confusing, or aesthetically offensive, while regular park users mark their trail routes with stone arrows and cairns or simply refer to familiar landmarks, such as distinct trees, as a means of navigating through the park.

Although some community members have become reluctant to invest in formal park signage due to an increase in incidents of sign vandalism, an accurate and comprehensive trail marker system within the park, and trail maps made available at park access gates and on the RDN parks website, would greatly improve park accessibility and safety.

### 3.3.4 Access and Parking

Access into the 707CP from public roads or right-of-ways occurs at four locations: Ricki Avenue (currently gated), Jeanette Avenue, Fisher Road and Coats Drive. Two undeveloped public road accesses, Mary Rd, and Brydie Rd, two undeveloped road right-of-ways, Tin Can Alley and McCollum Rd, and two existing easements to the west and east of the 707CP, provide opportunities for future park access development (Figure 3.2). There are also several established accesses into the 707CP through bordering private and crown federal lands which will need to be either formalized through easements or agreements with owners or blocked from future use.

Road-side parking currently occurs at the four public road access points to the park (Ricki Ave, Jeanette Ave, Fisher Road and Coats Drive), however, these informal parking areas can only accommodate 1-2 cars and have become problematic for local residents whose driveways have been blocked by park visitors. At public consultation sessions, community members have requested that parking space be made available either inside the park or along main roads. Three potential parking areas within the 707CP were identified during public consultation and site assessment: the west side of the park with access from South Road; the east side of the park, with access from North Road (previously used as a parking area); and the south end of the park inside two adjacent community parks with access off of Coats Drive. Each site would need to accommodate an informal, permeable parking area for approximately 5 cars (68 square metres or 740 square feet).

### 3.3.5 Emergency Response Services

Although fire, police, and ambulance assistance on Gabriola Island are provided by the Gabriola Volunteer Fire Department (GVFD), the RCMP and the BC Ambulance Service respectively, there is no road access into or throughout 707CP.



Located at the west side of the property, approximately 350m west of North Rd, “The Twin Firs” are an important 707CP way-finding landmark.



Figure 3.6 Possible future parking areas inside the 707CP: South Road, North Road, and Coats Drive.



Fire pit inside the 707CP.

The greatest hazard in the 707CP is the risk of fire associated with neighbouring residential areas and human activities in the park such as smoking, campfires, and the use of motorized machinery and vehicles. Gabriola Island falls entirely within the Gabriola Fire Protection Improvement District which oversees operations of the GVFD. Additional firefighting assistance may be requested from the Ministry of Forests and Range (MoFR) Coastal Fire Centre. Costs for the Coastal Fire Centre's services are charged back to the local government and generally based on risk and fire initiation cause (BC Wildfire Regulation 38/2005, 70/2009). The GVFD has requested assistance from the Coastal Fire Centre only once in the last twenty years for an escaped slash-burn on the 707CP lands.



Figure 3.7 GVFD recommended emergency access routes between South Rd, North Rd and Fisher Rd.

The GVFD has identified a main east-west emergency access route through the park, from South Rd to North Rd, a portion of which is currently composed of an existing trail referred to as "Central Road". Access to a future emergency access from South Rd would require an easement through the bordering property to the west of the park.

There are currently several clearings in the 707CP wide enough to accommodate a helicopter landing in the event of a serious medical emergency requiring off-island evacuation. A designated helipad site would need to be identified and managed to prevent reforestation.

### 3.3.6 Unauthorized Uses and Vandalism

The following incidents of vandalism and unauthorized park use have been reported by community members or observed during site assessment:



Informal notices posted by park neighbours inside the 707CP.

- sign destruction and removal
- dumping
- long-term camping
- campfires
- smoking
- native plant removal
- tree cutting
- hunting
- motorized vehicle use (dirt bike, ATV, pick-up truck, snowmobile)



Dumping in the 707CP

Because it is neither possible to fence the entire perimeter of the park property nor to ensure daily monitoring and by-law enforcement, preventative measures such as public education and stewardship need to be taken in order to reduce the incidents of vandalism and unauthorized park use which continue to create issues around community safety, park maintenance and forest regeneration in the 707CP.

## 3.4 Opportunities

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The 707CP provides several cultural and recreational opportunities for residents and visitors to Gabriola Island.

### 3.4.1 Education

The 707CP provides many non-profit, outdoor educational opportunities for students of all ages and level:

- **ecology**
- **bird watching**
- **photography**
- **sketching and painting**

A future junior warden or “Students to Stewards” program for elementary and secondary students would connect Gabriola children and youth to the natural environment while contributing significantly to the management of the 707CP.

As children, we need time to wander, to be outside, to nibble on icicles and watch ants, to build with dirt and sticks in a hollow of the earth, to lie back and contemplate clouds and chickadees. These simple acts forge the connections that define a land of ones own -- home and refuge for both girls and boys. Mentors help, answering the questions we bring back from the land. With these childhood experiences we begin. They form the secure foundation to which we return again and again in our struggle to be strong and connected, to be complete.

- **Gary Naghan & Stephen Trimble**

*(The Geography of Childhood: Why Children Need Wild Places, 1994)*

### 3.4.2 Cross-Island Trail Network

As the largest and most central parcel of public land on Gabriola Island, the 707CP provides integral off-road connections between all Gabriola Parks, including one major cross-island connection:

#### **Descanso Bay Regional Park to Drumbeg Provincial Park**

Although a completed cross-island trail system for Gabriola Island will require planning, negotiation with private landowners, funding and time, three trail developments within the 707CP would significantly contribute to this goal:

- **Tin Can Alley:** An improved trail connection along an undeveloped portion of Tin Can Alley would link the northwest corner of the 707CP with North Road.
- **Central Road:** The “Central Road” trail within the 707CP follows an historic 1875 road alignment that runs between North Rd and South Rd. An access agreement through private forestry land on the west side of the park would restore this connection.
- **Tunnel Trail:** A road-side pedestrian trail along North Rd from the west side of the 707CP to Elder Cedar Nature Reserve (currently under development), would account for 1/3 of the distance between the 707CP and Drumbeg Provincial Park.

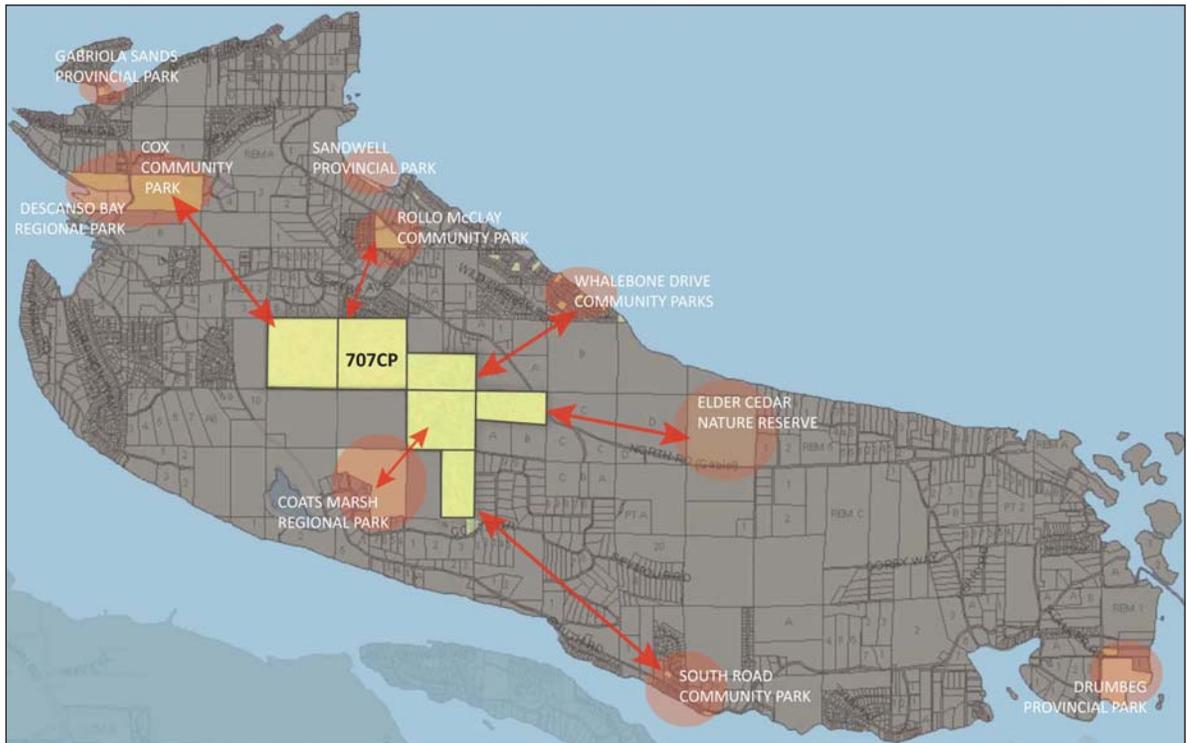


Figure 3.8 707CP connections with other Gabriola Island parks

### 3.4.3 Tourism

There are currently 26 registered visitor accommodations on Gabriola Island ranging from inns and resorts to B&B and a bunkhouse catering to bicyclists; Descanso Bay Regional Park, located at the northwest end of the island, has 32 camp sites. The Official Visitor Guide & Map for Gabriola Island, published by The Gabriola Chamber of Commerce, identifies all provincial, regional and community parks on Gabriola, including the 707CP. Amongst the several suggested activities listed in the guide, one activity is well suited to the 707CP: “See deer on a hike through acres of quiet trails...”

Nature-based tourism, when properly managed, is a way of offering low impact experiences that result in a diversity of benefits to tourists and the local economy and ultimately to the natural area itself through raised awareness about the efforts required to preserve and protect its qualities.

### 3.5 Ecological Status

The 707CP lands are recovering quickly and naturally from a long history of agriculture, mining and logging. This is due to a combination of factors including good soils, mild climate, presence of seed trees, low physical disturbance to understory layers during logging, and rapid growth of pioneer and successional species (particularly Red Alder, Douglas-fir, and Arbutus). Natural recovery is in keeping with the community’s desire to “do the minimum” and “let the park heal”. Some small-scale restoration work may be required to prevent trail erosion, to remove small patches of invasive plants and to retain key views.

#### 3.5.1 Soil Composition

Soils particular to a site influence and affect hydrology and plant communities, which in turn influence and affect wildlife species. Soil composition also has implications for site development in terms of permeability, compaction and stability. The various soil types and related management implications are summarized the following table and as well as referenced in the map below:

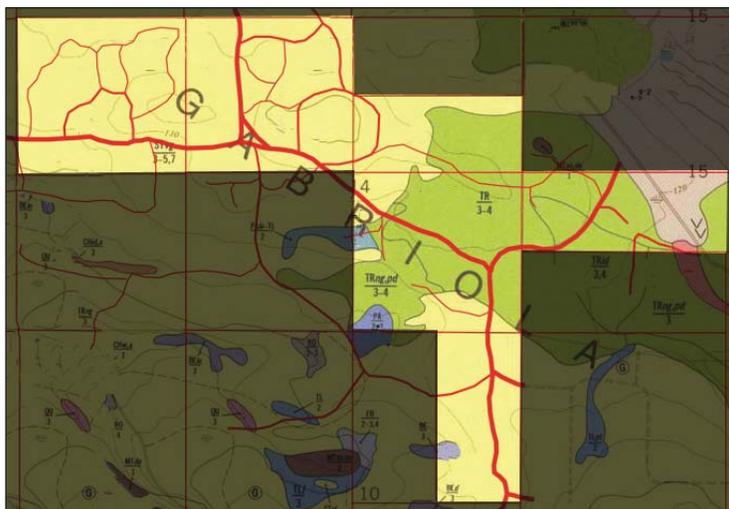


Figure 3.9 707CP Soil Composition - location of existing trails shown in red.

SOIL TYPE	DESCRIPTION	IMPLICATION
 Saturna	thin deposits of sandy-loam with sandstone rock fragments	well drained
 Trincomali	gravelly sandy loams developed over a veneer of sands and gravels	well drained
 Parksville-Tolmie	marine till overlain by poorly drained silty clay loam to sandy clay loam	flooding implications, relocate trails
 Brigantine	sandy clay loam soils developed on marine till materials	poorly drained, relocate trails
 Mexicana	deep deposits of compact, loam to sandy loam over glacial till on side slope	imperfectly drained, wetland indicator
 Baynes	Deep, sandy loam in a depressional drainage way	imperfectly drained, wetland indicator

### 3.5.2 Hydrology

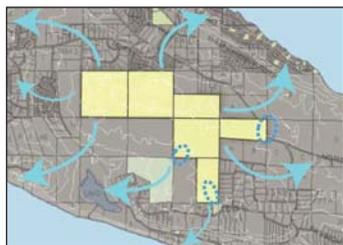


Figure 3.10 Pattern of groundwater run-off from the 707CP site. Area of water retention within the 707CP indicated with blue dotted line.

All of the groundwater on Gabriola Island results from the rain and snow that falls on the island. Comprising 6% of Gabriola Island's total land base and the highest point on the island, the 707CP lands provide ecological services for Gabriola Island that extend well beyond the park boundary.

The 707CP watershed receives precipitation, which is then filtered by the land, stored as groundwater and shed downhill to rural residential wells outside the park where the water table is much closer to the surface and has less storage capacity. Several depressional areas in the park store water through the late fall and winter months, and support seasonal wetland communities.

### 3.5.3 Plant Communities

#### COASTAL DOUGLAS-FIR BIOGEOCLIMATIC ZONE:

Gabriola Island falls entirely within the moist-maritime **Coastal Douglas-fir (CDF) Biogeoclimatic Zone**. The characteristic and dominant tree species of this zone is Douglas-fir. A few of the most common occurring tree and shrub species also associated with the CDF and occurring in the 707CP are listed in the table below. A complete plant inventory can be found in **Appendix F: 707CP Ecological Inventory**.



Douglas-fir: the dominant tree species in the 707CP



Salal: dominant understory shrub species in the 707CP

	BOTANICAL NAME	COMMON NAME
trees	<i>Pseudotsuga menziesii var.menziesii</i>	Douglas-fir
	<i>Arbutus menziesii</i>	arbutus
	<i>Abies grandis</i>	grand fir
	<i>Thuja plicata</i>	western red cedar
	<i>Tsuga heterophylla</i>	western hemlock
	<i>Alnus rubra</i>	red alder
	<i>Acer macrophyllum</i>	big leaf maple
shrubs	<i>Prunus emarginata</i>	bitter cherry
	<i>Gaultheria shallon</i>	salal
	<i>Mahonia nervosa</i>	dull Oregon-grape
	<i>Holodiscus discolor</i>	oceanspray
	<i>Vaccinium parvifolium</i>	red huckleberry
	<i>Vaccinium ovatum</i>	evergreen huckleberry
	<i>Salix spp</i>	willows
	<i>Rubus spectabilis</i>	salmonberry
	<i>Rubus parviflorus</i>	thimbleberry
<i>Spiraea douglasii</i>	hardhack	

Table 3.2 Plant species of the Coastal Douglas-fir Biogeoclimatic Zone occurring in the 707CP

Distribution of different plant species throughout the 707CP depends on varying soil conditions (moisture and nutrient regimes) and levels of site disturbance. Most plant communities are currently in the early successional stages of forest regeneration. In the oldest logged areas, post-logging pioneer species such as red alder are already being replaced by Douglas-fir. In drier areas within the 707CP, typically at higher elevations, Arbutus trees are thriving and growing at a rate of 1-1.5 metres per year.



Arbutus: Arbutus groves have become established on dry, rocky sites in the 707CP.

**SENSITIVE SITES:**

Because the 707CP lands were being actively logged during the Sensitive Ecosystems Inventory (SEI) of Eastern Vancouver Island (1993-1997) there were no SEI sites noted during the study. However, there are a few distinct areas in the 707CP that are rare within the southern Gulf Islands and which deserve recognition as sensitive areas within the park:



Oceanspray: shrub commonly found in areas of the 707CP dominated by Douglas-fir and Arbutus

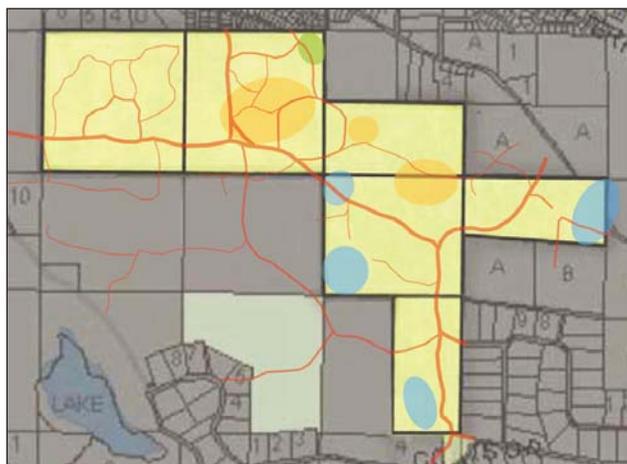


Figure 3.11 Sensitive areas within the 707CP: wetlands (blue), meadows (orange) and old forest (dark green).

**ROCKY MEADOW:** Shallow soils veneered onto sandstone bedrock outcrops support woodland meadow plant communities. Although the sites are dominated by introduced grasses and forbs, native species, including interesting mid-season lilies, were found.

**OLDER FOREST:** Area contains several Dougl’s-fir trees that are greater than 90 years of age. This site slopes to the north on richer mesic soils and is dominated by large big leaf maple, Douglas-fir and sword fern. Appears to have been less impacted by previous logging.

**WETLAND:** Two distinct marsh plant communities exist in several moist, depressional sites. A wetland area on either side of North Rd, with a layer of greater than 20cm of organic soil and the only area with year-round water retention in the 707CP, is dominated by western red cedar, red alder, Pacific crab apple, slough sedge, bluejoint grass and skunk cabbage. An area adjacent to Coats Marsh Regional Park, commonly referred to as “Groundwater Lake”, which appears to be relatively undisturbed, is seasonally wet with the presence of grand fir.



Wet area located on the western boundary of 707CP, diagonally northeast from Coats Marsh RP.



Meadow plant community occurring on rocky sites within the 707CP.



Scotch Broom in the 707CP.

### EXOTIC INVASIVE PLANTS:

Because of the extensive disturbance on the 707CP site as a result of agriculture and logging, the following disturbance-responsive, **exotic invasive** plant species are found in the park, mostly along the trails and road margins:

- *Cytisus scoparius* (Scotch Broom)
- *Leucanthemum vulgare* (oxeye daisies)
- *Arctium minus* (Common burdock)
- *Convolvulus arvensis* (Field bindweed)
- *Plantago lanceolata* (English plantain)
- *Cirsium arvense* (Canada thistle)
- *Festuca occidentalis* (western fescue)
- *Dactylis glomerata* (orchard grass)

Priority for invasive removal should be given to Scotch Broom, however occurrence of broom is restricted mainly to trail edges. A complete list of exotic invasive plant species can be found in **Appendix F: 707CP Ecological Inventory**.

### 3.5.4 Wildlife



Band-tailed Pigeon

Decades of logging in the 707CP lands has provided a habitat for a suite of wildlife species that would not have been present prior to logging. Forest successional changes will again see a turnover in species. During site visits conducted in 2009, coastal black-tailed deer were seen browsing throughout the site, as were several bird species such as typical summer songbirds, woodpeckers and raptors. The park supports a variety of invertebrates including species of dragonfly, butterfly, and bumblebees which are food for insectivorous birds. A complete list of wildlife species observed in the 707CP during site visits in 2009 can be found in **Appendix F: 707CP Ecological Inventory**

Three species at risk were observed in the park during 2009 site visits: Band-tailed Pigeon (*Patagioenas fasciata*), Turkey vulture (*Cathartes aura*), and Red-legged frog (*Rana aurora*). There are currently no species at risk records for the 707CP at the BC Conservation Data Centre.



Red-legged Frog

### 3.5.5. Restoration

Natural regeneration has been rapid in most areas of the park and only spot tree planting may be required in the few places where trees have not established, or in the case of scotch broom removal along trails. In the absence of periodic fire, natural successional processes will result in a continuous Douglas-fir canopy cover, and the loss of key viewpoint areas within meadows and arbutus groves. If views are to be retained, Douglas-fir seedling need to be removed from selected areas, effectively holding succession in place as an Arbutus Woodland Meadow. This scenario would require a commitment from park stakeholders and RDN to actively manage for this ecosystem type.

## 4.0 SUMMARY OF ISSUES

The following 13 management issues, as identified during the process of community consultation, research and site inventory, directly inform the management direction for the 707CP:

■ **RESTORATION AND PRESERVATION:**

Allowing the 707CP forest to regenerate by way of environmental protection and natural ecological succession while selectively preserving distinct park features such as viewpoints, developing arbutus groves and trails.

■ **RECREATIONAL USE:**

Accommodating appropriate recreational uses within the community wilderness environment of the 707CP that are consistent with the park's overarching management objectives of environmental protection, community safety and inclusiveness.

■ **ACCESSES AND TRESPASSES:**

Securing formal access agreements with neighbouring landowners whose properties provide key access routes into the 707CP by way of easements and future parkland dedication. Blocking and rerouting existing park accesses that create trespassing and security issues for park users and neighbouring landowners.

■ **EMERGENCY RESPONSE:**

Identifying an effective emergency response route from main public roads, through the 707CP and ensuring that road surfacing, grade, width and overhead clearance are maintained to accommodate fire, ambulance and police vehicle access. Maintaining a potential helicopter landing site along the main emergency route.

■ **PARKING:**

Locating and developing vehicle parking / horse hitching areas in the 707CP with minimal impact to the natural environment (i.e. existing clearings adjacent to major public roads).

■ **TRAIL SYSTEM:**

Managing a trail system that accommodates non-motorized park uses through the designation and distinction of multi-use and limited-use trails within the 707CP. Making necessary improvements to existing trails to maintain accessibility and visibility and to reduce the risk of user injury and property damage.

- **WAYFINDING:**  
Creating a clear, comprehensive and unobtrusive wayfinding system for park users through the use of trail names, signage, markers and maps.
- **PARK AMENITIES:**  
Identifying key locations and design standards for appropriate 707CP amenities such as hand-made park benches and community information kiosks and trail markers.
- **PARK MISUSES AND VANDALISM:**  
Dealing effectively with vandalism, littering, defacement and other inappropriate activities within the 707CP.
- **PARK MANAGEMENT:**  
Ensuring cooperative management of the 707CP by the community of Gabriola Island, the RDN, the LTC, and the Snuneymuxw First Nation.
- **STEWARDSHIP AND MAINTENANCE:**  
Supplementing general park maintenance by park staff with volunteer stewardship programs that focus on regular park monitoring, invasive plant removal and wildlife protection.
- **CROSS-ISLAND TRAIL CONNECTIONS:**  
Identifying and developing key access routes between the 707CP and major roads and trails on Gabriola Island as part of a cross-island trail network linking Descano Bay Regional Park with Drumbeg Provincial Park.
- **TOURISM:**  
Managing the 707CP as a community space primarily for residents of Electoral Area "B" without active promotion of tourism-based activities in the park.

## 5.0 VISION, PRINCIPLES & GOALS

### 5.1 Vision

**In the heart of Gabriola Island, the 707 Community Park is a special wilderness recreation sanctuary providing a deep ecological and spiritual connection between humans and nature, with minimal impact to the environment.**

Although it takes 250 years to grow a Douglas-fir tree from seed to an old growth tree in the Coastal Douglas-fir Biogeoclimatic Zone, the residents of Gabriola Island feel passionately about restoring and preserving the 707CP lands for future generations. The vision statement for the 707CP reflects the community's commitment to stewardship, education and sensitive recreational use for the first ten-year period of 707CP management, and ultimately for the long-term process of restoration and conservation.



Deer emerging from a densely forested area in the 707CP.

### 5.2 Principles

The underlying principle for management of the 707CP is **minimal intervention**. In addition, all policies and actions regarding the 707CP must reflect management guidelines outlined in Section 1.5 and summarized below:

- **Gabriola Island Official Community Plan**
- **Islands Trust Act**
- **RDN Park Bylaw No.1399**
- **Develop with Care Guidelines, BC Ministry of Environment**



A red alder lined walkway in the 707CP.

### 5.3 Management Goals

The following four goals form the framework for policies and management actions in the 707CP for the ten-year period of park management from 2010-2020:

- **ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION:** To preserve and protect both natural and cultural heritage values within the park by managing recreational use and allowing the natural process of ecological succession to continue with minimal intervention.



Meadowlands on "Jimmy's Ridge" in the 707CP.

- **SENSITIVE RECREATIONAL USE:** To provide recreational opportunities that are compatible with the 707CP vision of a wilderness recreation sanctuary and that avoid conflict with park neighbours, while providing access for the whole community and creating connections with other Gabriola Island parks and trails.
  
- **PUBLIC SAFETY:** To create a safe environment in the 707CP for park visitors and park neighbours through hazard reduction, wildfire protection, regular park monitoring for unauthorized park uses, improved accessibility and trail signage, and increased community awareness and understanding.
  
- **COMMUNITY STEWARDSHIP:** To ensure active community involvement in the management, maintenance and development of the 707CP through collaborative efforts involving all stakeholders (Gabriola Island residents, Snuneymuxw First Nation, the Gabriola Local Trust Committee, the Island's Trust and the RDN), and through the development of stewardship and educational opportunities in the 707CP.



Distinct Douglas-fir trees retained in the 707CP throughout periods of logging.

## 6.0 POLICIES AND ACTIONS

The following Policies and Actions reflect the themes of the Management Goals for the 707CP while addressing all park issues summarized in section 4.0.

### 6.1 Environmental Protection

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#### 6.1.1 Conservation Covenant

**Register a Conservation Covenant on title for the 707CP property in order to preserve and protect the land while restricting further sale or subdivision.**

A condition for the creation of the 707CP was that a **Conservation Covenant** for the property be held by the Trust Fund Board and one other local group in order to preserve, protect, and restrict further sale or subdivision of the land. A draft of the Conservation Covenant for the 707CP is included in **Appendix G: Conservation Covenant**.

There are currently six titles comprising the 707CP, as well as two adjoining community park parcels south of the park along Coats Drive. Prior to covenant registration, all eight parcels will be consolidated to restrict further sale or subdivision.

The Trust Fund Board will take the lead role as one of two necessary Land Trust organizations holding the covenant and will be responsible for annual monitoring of its terms. Two other local groups on Gabriola Island, the Gabriola Historical and Museum Society (GHMS) and the Gabriola Land and Trails Trust (GaLTT), are authorized by the BC Ministry of Agriculture and Lands to accept covenants under Section 219 of the Land Title Act, and to accept statutory rights of way under Section 218 of the Land Title Act. Other off-island land trusts working in the area include the Nanaimo and Area Land Trust (NALT), and The Land Conservancy (TLC). The second holder of the Conservation Covenant will be chosen in collaboration with the Trust Fund Board.

The terms of the Covenant will reflect the specific management directions for the 707CP defined through this Management Plan and should be reviewed after five years of registration. The management plan will need to be distilled into a Summary of Site Conditions and attached to the Covenant as Schedule B. The Land Title Office (LTO) provides guidelines for report format, graphic style and submission to which the summary report must adhere.



### 6.1.2 Invasive Plant Management

#### **Implement regular monitoring and removal of invasive plant communities in the 707CP.**

Although successional changes will increase shade cover and reduce opportunities for invasive plant species such as scotch broom and blackberry to spread through the park, the 707CP will be regularly monitored and maintained for invasive plant removal by park staff, park neighbours and volunteer park stewards, following guidelines and methods established by the Invasive Plant Council of BC. Additionally, RDN Park Bylaw 1399 prohibits activities such as dumping of garden waste in public parks in order to decrease the likelihood of invasive plant introduction.

Although several exotic invasive plant species were identified throughout the 707CP, priority should be given to Scotch Broom and English Holly removal because of the aggressive tendencies of these plants and because of isolated occurrences within the park which can be easily managed. Areas of invasive plant removal should be replanted with native trees and shrubs from within the park. A complete invasive plant inventory for the 707CP can be found in **Appendix F: 707CP Ecological Inventory** and an invasive plant summary can be found in Section 3.5.3.

### 6.1.3 Restoration

#### **Allow natural successional change to be the dominant restorative force in the 707CP.**

Ecosystems in the 707CP will be slowly restored, managed and sustained through natural processes. However, active restoration management programs will be implemented when natural processes are not effective due to interfering human activities that cannot be controlled, or where other efforts to recover species and ecosystems at risk require intervention.

Supplementary restorative measures that benefit both ecosystem health and trail quality should be favoured, for example, replanting areas of invasive plant removal, slash-pile removal and trail closure with plants currently obstructing emergency access routes. As the land recovers and the forest of the 707CP matures, the services of a professional ecosystems biologist should be employed to assess park conditions and to guide park planning and maintenance practices in order to ensure a healthy forest ecosystem.

### 6.1.4 Preservation

**Identify and preserve distinct ecological and cultural areas and features within the 707CP.**

- **ECOLOGICAL FEATURES:** To avoid negative impacts to **sensitive areas** in the 707CP (rocky meadows, older forest and wetlands), and associated wildlife communities, including several **species at risk** observed in the park (Band-tailed Pigeon, Turkey vulture and Red-legged frog), the park trail system will be maintained and managed to encourage sensitive recreational use.
- **HISTORICAL FEATURES:** To avoid negative impacts to **pre-historic and historic cultural heritage features** and values in the park, the services of a professional archaeologist will be secured to monitor any activity requiring ground clearing or earth moving, such as new trails construction, trail realignment and trail grading, where a site has not been previously disturbed by trail surface maintenance or excavations. Additionally, a **historic trail alignment** identified on a 1875 survey map of Gabriola Island will be preserved by restoring a trail access through the 707CP between South Rd and North Rd.

## 6.2 Sensitive Recreational Use

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### 6.2.1 Authorized Park Uses

**Maintain existing recreational uses, and consider future recreational opportunities, that are in keeping with the community vision for the 707CP as a “wilderness recreation sanctuary” - activities that cause minimal disturbance to the park’s natural and cultural resources and require little if any infrastructure.**

All noninvasive, nondestructive, environmentally and socially conscientious and beneficial human activities are welcome in the 707CP. While new proposed activities will be assessed for suitability for the 707CP by both the RDN and the community of Gabriola Island, the **established recreational activities** that fit this description and will be maintained are:

- hiking
- biking
- cross-country skiing
- snow-shoeing
- picnicking
- horseback riding
- dog walking

Unintrusive **educational activities**, which do not harm the park's environment or interfere with other recreational activities, are also welcome in the 707CP. Possible activities include:

- **ecological research**
- **geological research**
- **bird watching**
- **photography**
- **sketching and painting**

Some areas of the 707CP are designated for limited access (low impact, pedestrian and bike access only) because of ecological sensitivity. Refer to Figure 6.1 for location of side trails with limited access for pedestrians and cyclists only.

**No commercial activity** of any kind is allowed in the 707CP. All other prohibited park uses for the 707CP correspond with RDN Park Bylaw 1399, which can be found on the RDN website ([www.rdn.bc.ca](http://www.rdn.bc.ca)).

## 6.2.2 Park Trails

**Manage the multi-use trail network to protect sensitive areas from recreational impacts while providing opportunity for safe, sustainable community recreation and cross-island active transportation.**

Because an important park management task is to sustain balance between recreational use and environmental protection, the 707CP trail system will provide visitors the opportunity to experience the park's natural environment while limiting access and potential damage to surrounding vegetation and wildlife habitat.

Based on requests made by the community during public consultation sessions, the existing, informal trail system in the 707CP will continue to function largely as a multi-use system accommodating non-motorized recreational activities such as hiking, running, biking, dog-walking and horseback riding. Trail users are to employ common trail etiquette such as yielding to pedestrians and removing animal waste from trails.

Although most of the existing trails will retain their existing trail alignment, width and surfacing, a few trails will be upgraded to prevent erosion and to improve accessibility for wheelchair and medi-cart use, while others will be realigned in order to avoid trespassing onto neighbouring properties. Some trails will be restricted to horseback riding because of environmental sensitivity or safety concerns. Refer to Figure 6.2 for required amendments to the existing 707CP trail system and Figure 6.3 for a revised trail network plan .

In addition to recreational activities within the park, the 707CP provides trail connections to other parks and trails on Gabriola Island. The RDN will work with GaLTT to develop a road-side trail along North Road from the west side of the 707CP to Elder Cedar Nature Reserve which will account for 1/3 of the distance between the 707CP and Drumbeg Provincial Park - a significant portion of Gabriola Island's cross-island trail plan.

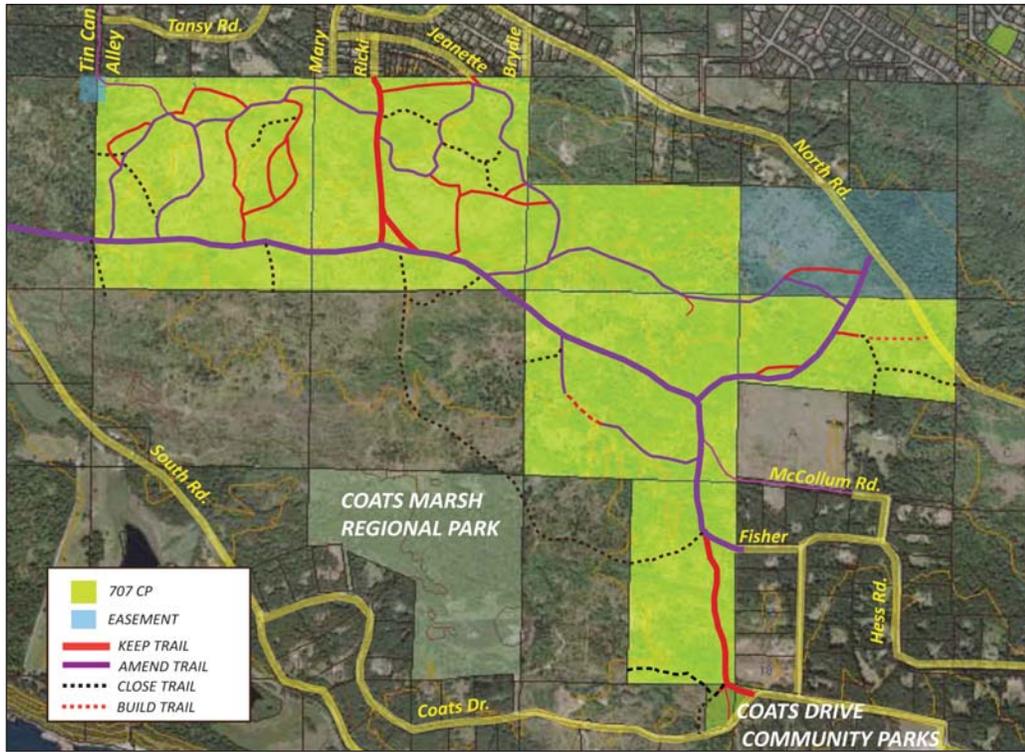


Figure 6.2 707CP Trail Amendment Plan

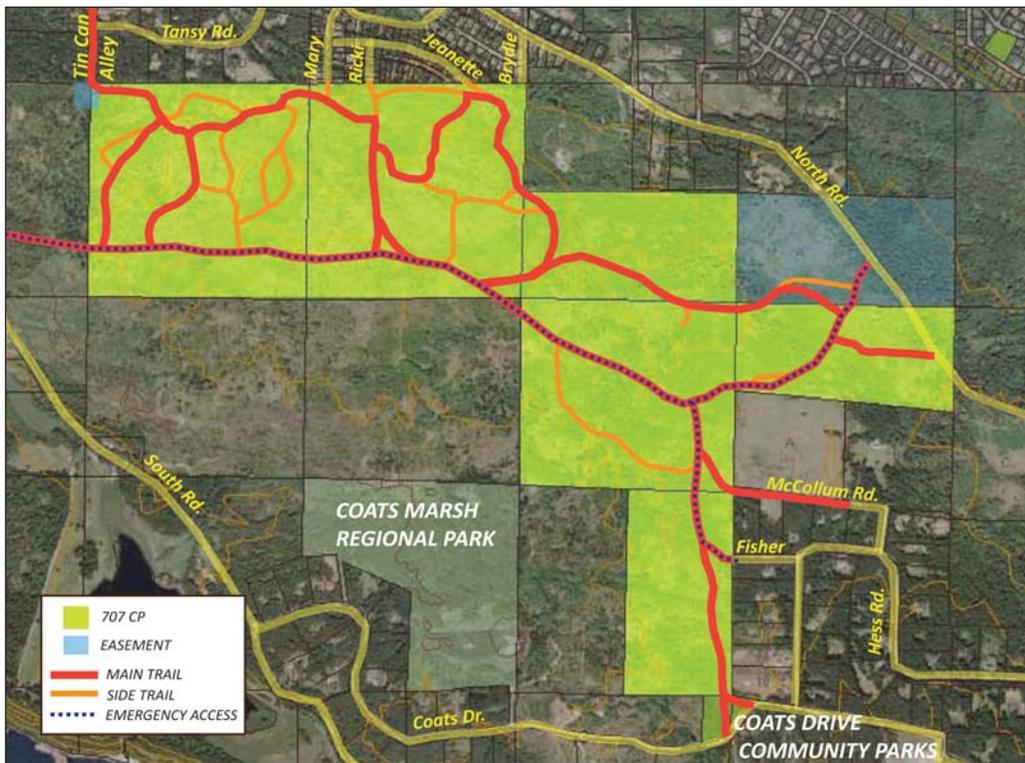


Figure 6.3 Revised 707CP Trail Network

### 6.2.3 Park Access

**Work with neighbouring property owners to develop formal access agreements for existing informal park accesses into the 707CP that are to be retained.**

The following neighbouring properties currently provide informal accesses into the 707CP which could be retained through formal access agreements with current land-owners:

- **PRIVATE FORESTRY LAND WEST OF 707CP PARCEL 1:** This neighbouring property, legally described as the EAST 1/2 OF THE NORTH WEST 1/4 OF SECTION 13, GABRIOLA ISLAND, NANAIMO DISTRICT EXCEPT PART IN PLAN 21531 AND VIP75042, currently provides informal pedestrian access into the park along a 390m long trail from South Rd. The trail would also provide future access for parking and an emergency vehicles route through the park.
- **PRIVATE FORESTRY LAND SOUTH OF 707CP PARCEL 2:** This neighbouring property, legally described as THE SOUTH WEST 1/4 OF SECTION 14, GABRIOLA ISLAND, NANAIMO DISTRICT, currently includes a portion of the 707CP Central Trail in its north-west corner. The property would also provide a future trail connection to Coats Marsh Regional Park.
- **PRIVATE FORESTRY LAND WEST OF 707CP PARCEL 6:** This neighbouring property, legally described as THE WEST 1/2 OF THE NORTH EAST 1/4 OF SECTION 10, GABRIOLA ISLAND, NANAIMO DISTRICT, provides trail connections between the 707CP and Coats Marsh Regional Park.

### 6.2.4 Park Entrances

**Designate and manage distinct access types into the 707CP to ensure public safety, avoid or reduce impacts to natural values and minimize adverse impacts on park neighbours.**

All authorized accesses into the 707CP are for non-motorized multi-use (hiking, biking, horse-back riding, wheelchair), unless specified as limited access (no horse-back riding), or vehicular access to parking (refer to Figure 6.3). Limited Access is associated with narrow, rough side trails within the 707CP, while vehicular access into parking areas is from main roads such as South Rd, North Rd and Coats Drive. Gate installation will be necessary at emergency vehicle entrance points to prevent regular motorized vehicle access.

Trail width, grading and clearance height will correspond with following park entrance classifications:



Limited access route into 707CP.

- **LIMITED ACCESS (SIDE TRAILS):** 1 meter maximum width, 2 meter vertical clearance, rough grading and surfacing, limited to pedestrian and cyclist use only.
- **NON-MOTORIZED MULTI-USE (MAIN TRAILS):** 2.5 meter width, 3 meter minimum clearance, regrading and resurfacing where necessary to accommodate wheelchair, stroller, pedestrian, bicycle and horse access.
- **VEHICLE ACCESS (EMERGENCY ACCESS ROUTE):** 4 meter width, 3 meter clearance, regrading and resurfacing where necessary to accommodate motorized vehicle access.

## 6.2.5 Trail Wayfinding and Signage

**Develop and implement an accurate and comprehensive trail wayfinding system for the 707CP, including trail names, markers and maps, to improve park accessibility and safety.**

The existing, informal trail system in the 707CP will be improved and amended as necessary for the purpose of park accessibility and public safety. Because many community members feel that it is currently too easy to get lost in the park, and because there is currently no way for park visitors to identify or reference their location within the park in the event of an emergency, a trail hierarchy and trail naming system will be implemented to facilitate trail wayfinding and emergency communication in the 707CP.

The preliminary trail concept plan, showing proposed trail classification, is shown in Figure 6.3. Trails will be assigned names based on either existing informal trail names identified during public consultation, or connecting street names. Trails will be classified as either **main trails** or **side trails**:



Possible wood post trail marker.

- **MAIN TRAILS:** Existing trails which are clearly defined, well used and provide main connections to all other trails within the 707CP will be classified as main trails. These trails will be multi-use, named, and maintained at a minimum width of 2.5m and a minimum vertical clearance of 3m. Some regrading, culverting and resurfacing is required along portions of main trail to improve accessibility.
- **SIDE TRAILS:** Existing narrow trails which receive infrequent use and provide access through environmentally sensitive areas within the 707CP will be classified as side trails. These trails be maintained at a maximum width of 1m and a maximum vertical clearance of 2m. While still referenced on the 707CP trail map and designated with trail markers, side trails will remain unnamed and will be limited to pedestrian and cyclist use only. Some existing side trails that create trespassing issues will not be signed or maintained.

The RDN will work in consultation with residents of Gabriola Island to finalize a trail naming system and trail signage design that will be in keeping with the community's desire for unobtrusive and rustic park signage. A few simple trail marker options include wood posts along main trails or distinct rocks along side trails.

Once the trail marker system is finalized, all existing informal signage in the 707CP will be removed and replaced by new trail markers and name signs. Based on the amended trail marker system, an updated trail map will be completed and posted on park entrance signs as well as at key points throughout the park. The 707CP trail map, along with a cross-island trail map for Gabriola Island, will also be made available on the RDN Parks website.

### 6.2.6 Park Amenities

**Install park amenities at key locations throughout the 707CP that both suit and enhance the park's wilderness recreation experience.**

Because park visitors are required to stay on designated trails and to take their litter with them, large-scale structures and urban amenities that could potentially increase park litter and recreational activity within sensitive ecological areas (i.e. commercial play structures, picnic tables, picnic shelters and garbage cans) will not be installed in the 707CP.

Only park amenities that enhance the park's recreational function with no negative impact on its ecological and cultural values will be installed along main trails and accesses. The following amenities are allowed inside the 707CP:

- **entrance signage**
- **trail signage or markers**
- **rustic benches**

### 6.2.7 Parking Areas

**Identify and develop parking areas inside the 707CP boundary to minimize impact to park neighbours and to provide a safe and accessible staging area for all park users, with minimal disturbance to the park's natural and cultural values.**

At public consultation sessions, community members have requested that parking space be made available either inside the 707CP or along main roads. Three potential parking areas with access from main roads have been identified:

- **WEST PARKING:** located in 707CP parcel 1 with access from South Rd through neighbouring forestry land.
- **EAST PARKING:** located in 707CP parcel 5 with access from North Rd by way of a blanket easement through neighbouring crown land.
- **SOUTH PARKING:** located inside two community parks south of 707CP parcel 6 with access from Coats Drive.



Possible log bench inside the 707CP.



Informal, permeable parking area to accommodate 4-5 cars.

Parking area selection is based on topography (flat sites), drainage (well drained sites), and existing vegetative cover (cleared sites requiring little or no tree removal). Each of the identified locations need to accommodate an informal and permeable parking area for 5 cars (68 square metres or 740 square feet). Refer to Figure 6.3 for parking area locations within the 707CP.

## 6.3 PUBLIC SAFETY

### 6.3.1 Unauthorized Uses and Vandalism

Manage and reduce hazard risk by providing park users with information and educational opportunities explaining the impacts of vandalism and other unauthorized park uses on the cultural and ecological values of the 707CP.



Typical fire risk meter.

All authorized recreational activities for the 707CP are restricted to trails, meadow clearings and other designated areas. All prohibited park uses for the 707CP correspond with RDN Park Bylaw 1399, which can be found on the RDN website, [www.rdn.bc.ca](http://www.rdn.bc.ca). Unauthorized uses that have been noted inside the 707CP include:

- sign destruction and removal
- littering
- dumping
- dog and horse defecation on trails
- camping
- campfires
- native plant removal
- tree cutting
- hunting
- motorized vehicle use (dirt bike, ATV, pick-up truck, snowmobile)

Because it is not possible to block all park accesses or to conduct regular bylaw enforcement inspections, it will be necessary to raise awareness amongst park users of the risks associated with unauthorized park uses. During the process of public consultation, community members suggested that public educational sessions, educational literature, park signage and stewardship programs be developed in order to reduce the incidents of park misuse and vandalism.

### 6.3.2 Fire Hazard Reduction

**Implement a fuel reduction program and regular fire risk assessments for the 707CP to reduce the risk of fire through natural processes and unauthorized park uses.**

Campfires and motorized vehicle use, which increase the risk of wildfire, are prohibited by RDN Park Bylaw 1399. A No Smoking rule will also be imposed in the 707CP whenever the Province bans campfires in provincial parks and on Crown lands during the summer months. During periods of extreme fire hazard, the Gabriola Volunteer Fire Department (GVFD), in consultation with the RDN, will have the authority to close down the park to public access.

Although slash-piles provide denning, hibernating, nesting, perching and resting sites for a variety of park wildlife, they also create extreme fire risks within the 707CP. Remaining slash piles will be assessed by both the GVFD and Strategic Forest Management Inc. (SFMI) during the development of detailed fuel reduction prescriptions for the 707CP. Select logs and branches from prescribed slash-pile removal should be reused for construction of park amenities whenever possible.



Remaining slash pile in the 707CP.

### 6.3.3 Emergency Access

**Designate and maintain an emergency access route through the 707CP in collaboration with the Gabriola Volunteer Fire Department.**

The GVFD has identified three possible emergency access points and two connecting access routes through the 707CP:

- **EAST-WEST ROUTE** - Running between South Road and North Road along a portion of existing trail referred to as Central Road, this emergency access route will require a formal access agreement with a neighbouring property owner and the construction of a new park entrance at North Rd.
- **NORTH-SOUTH ROUTE** - Extending southward from the EAST-WEST ROUTE to Fisher Rd, this emergency access route will require entrance construction and gate installation at Fisher Rd.

The RDN will develop emergency access routes through the 707CP that will be maintained at a 4m width and a 4m vertical clearance in order to accommodate the GVFD vehicle height and wheel span. Entrance construction, gate installation and trail regrading (as well as culverting along wet portions of trail) will also be required to ensure emergency vehicle accessibility. Refer to Figure 6.1 for locations of designated emergency accesses in the 707CP.



Gabriola Volunteer Fire Department's emergency vehicle.

## 6.4 Community Stewardship

### 6.4.1 Collaborative Management

**Manage the 707CP as an important ecological and cultural community space on Gabriola Island through collaborative efforts involving all stakeholders.**

The management of the 707CP is a collaborative effort between the community of Gabriola Island, the Snuneymuxw First Nation, the Islands Trust, the Gabriola Local Trust Committee and the Regional District of Nanaimo.

As with the development of the 707 Management Plan, representatives from all interest groups will collectively review the completed plan after a five-year period (2015) and formally update the plan after a ten-year period (2020).

The RDN will communicate with all stakeholders through public information sessions, website updates, media releases and special advisory meetings. Park staff can be regularly reached by phone, email and in person:

RDN Recreation and Parks  
Oceanside Place  
830 West Island Highway  
Parksville BC, V9P 2X4  
parks@rdn.bc.ca  
1-888-828-2069



707CP Management Plan Advisory Subcommittee composed of members from the Gabriola Island community, the Snuneymuxw First Nation, the Islands Trust, the Gabriola Local Trust Committee and the RDN.

### 6.4.2 Volunteer Caretaking

**Coordinate park caretaking tasks between park staff, park neighbours and the larger community of Gabriola Island to ensure regular park monitoring and maintenance, as well as continuous community involvement with the 707CP.**

There is a strong spirit of community involvement and stewardship already present on Gabriola Island. In the 707CP, volunteer groups and individuals have posted trail markers and hazard signage, maintained trails, removed litter and reported incidents of unauthorized park use and vandalism to RDN park staff.

Because of limited funds available for park maintenance and development through the Area 'B' Community Parks Function (which serves a total of 30 community parks on Gabriola Island, Mudge Island and Decourcy Island), as well as limited staffing resources (one RDN Park Planner, one RDN Operations Coordinator and one RDN Park Technician for 172 parks within 7 electoral areas), volunteer caretaking will be an essential component of 707CP maintenance and development.



Poster for new RDN Volunteer program for Regional Parks.

The RDN is currently developing a Park Warden Program in select Regional Parks. Because of the size and nature of the 707CP, the development of a similar volunteer program is appropriate. After the completion of an application and training process, Park Wardens will be expected to complete the following duties:

- **visit park weekly, biweekly or monthly**
- **observe conditions of the park**
- **promote park protection**
- **report observations after every visit**

In addition to general park monitoring, the establishment of formal operational agreements with volunteer community groups such as GaLTT and the organization of volunteer park events would support necessary development and maintenance tasks in the 707CP: invasive plant removal, park bench construction, trail sign installation and litter removal.

### 6.4.3 Educational Programs

**Allow educational activities within the 707CP that are mutually beneficial to both park visitors and the park environment.**

Educational Programs, like Stewardship Programs, increase public awareness and connectivity with the park's natural environment and provide support to general restoration and conservation efforts by park staff. The 707CP provides many non-profit, outdoor educational opportunities for students of all ages and levels, however, programs that are developed in collaboration with local educational institutions will be particularly beneficial to both students and the ecological and cultural values in the 707CP.

A broad range of non-destructive **research opportunities** for students of Vancouver Island University, including biodiversity inventories, forest succession monitoring and archeological surveys and research, would help to increase understanding and documentation of ecosystem structure and pre-contact history for the 707CP. **Junior Warden programs** for students of Gabriola Elementary School, which could be integrated with the school curriculum, would contribute significantly to the management of the 707CP while giving local children the opportunity to connect with their natural environment.



Possible ecological field courses conducted in the 707CP.

## 7.0 OPERATIONAL ACTIONS

POLICY TOPIC	ACTIONS - LISTED IN ORDER OF PRIORITY	COST	FUNDING	INVOLVEMENT
<b>Environmental Protection</b>	1 Consolidate 707 parcels and register a Conservation Covenant on title.	legal costs - \$3000	Area B Community Parks Function	RDN staff, Islands Trust, GaLLT
	2 Implement regular monitoring and removal of invasive plants.	staff time	Area B Community Parks Function	RDN staff, Community Volunteers
	3 Complete ecological assessment and develop ecosystem management strategy	labour - \$10,000	Area B Community Parks Function, Grant Funding	Consultant
<b>Sensitive Recreational Use</b>	1 Secure formal access agreements for exiting park accesses through adjacent private properties.	staff time legal costs - \$1000	Area B Community Parks Function	RDN staff, Neighbouring Landowners
	2 Design and install a wayfinding system which includes maps at park entrances and signs along main trails.	staff time materials - \$8000	Area B Community Parks Function, In-kind donations	RDN staff, GaLLT, Community Volunteers
	3 Upgrade main trails to improve surfacing, drainage and accessibility through regrading and selective removal of vegetation.	materials & labour - \$10,000	Area B Community Parks Function	RDN staff, Contractors
	4 Construct permeable parking areas inside park and close to entrances off of main roads.	materials & labour - \$20,000	Area B Community Parks Function	RDN staff, Contractors
	5 Design and install benches along main trails and at viewpoints.	staff time materials - \$2000	Area B Community Parks Function, In-kind donations	RDN staff, Community Volunteers
<b>Public Safety</b>	1 Upgrade and maintain designated emergency access entrances and routes through culvert construction, regrading, selective removal of vegetation and gate installation.	materials & labour - \$20,000	Area B Community Parks Function	RDN staff, Contractors, GVFD
	2 Implement a fuel reduction program and conduct regular fire risk assessment to reduce the risk of fire.	staff time	Provincial Grant Funding	RDN staff, GVFD, Consultants
	3 Provide community with information regarding unauthorized park uses and vandalism through public information sessions, literature and website posting.	staff time	Area B Community Parks Function	RDN staff, Community Volunteers
<b>Community Stewardship</b>	1 Implement a volunteer park stewardship program to ensure regular park monitoring and maintenance, as well as continuous community involvement.	n/a	n/a	RDN staff, Community Volunteers

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