

Working  
**TOGETHER**  
for a Resilient  
Future



2013-2015 BOARD STRATEGIC PLAN

WORKING TOGETHER FOR A RESILIENT FUTURE



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## **Chairperson's Message**

On behalf of the Regional District of Nanaimo Board of Directors, I am pleased to present our 2013-2015 Board Strategic Plan: Working Together for a Resilient Future. This Plan lays a strong foundation for the Board, providing direction for the current term of office while maintaining a long term perspective for the Region. Through collaboration, informed decision-making and a commitment to action, the board will continue taking major strides toward realizing our vision for the future of the region, while respecting the interests of the residents we represent.

*Joe Stanhope, Chair, Regional District of Nanaimo Board*

## **REGIONAL DISTRICT OF NANAIMO BOARD OF DIRECTORS 2011-2013**

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Councillor, City of Nanaimo





## Part 1

### INTRODUCTION

The Regional District of Nanaimo is a diverse region made up of a mosaic of distinct communities. While it can be easy focus on the differences across the region, the Board of Directors made it clear that we share the same underlying values and aspirations. This connection strengthens our ability to work collaboratively across the region in pursuit of a common vision for the future.

The Board also recognizes that we are connected to the world at large, and the impacts of global economic instability, environmental change and other unpredictable shifts will have repercussions at home. These are uncertain times, and we intend to do what we can to ensure that region remains an exceptional place to live, adapting and thriving to continuous and inevitable change.

The role of the RDN Board of Directors is to represent the interests of the region's residents. Collectively, these interests reveal a desire for a positive future for the region grounded in a pragmatic, fiscally prudent approach to providing the services and amenities our residents need today. This plan aims to find balance by emphasizing short term priorities and actions that advance the region toward its longer term vision to become a resilient, self-sufficient community.

The purpose of this Strategic Plan is to express the vision and set the priorities of the Board of Directors for the current term of office. The plan also looks well beyond the 2013-2015 term, out to 2050, in order to establish a long term vision to work toward. It is the highest level plan for the Board, providing overall direction for the Regional District of Nanaimo, and informing staff's approach to planning, projects, and service provision.

This document is divided into two parts. As a high level strategic document, Part 1 outlines director priorities, describes the regional district context, and identifies internal and external drivers of change as well as long-standing Board vision, mission and values.

With this foundation, Part 2 focuses on implementation by emphasizing the Board's Strategic Priorities and Action Areas. The Strategic Priorities highlight issues that are particularly important for the organization to address as a whole. The Action Areas reflect the structure of the organization and outline more specific activities to be undertaken in the immediate future by each RDN department.

*Working Together for a Resilient Future* sets the stage for three years of action on creating a region of resilient communities, building on our past success and working hard for a promising future.





## THE REGIONAL DISTRICT

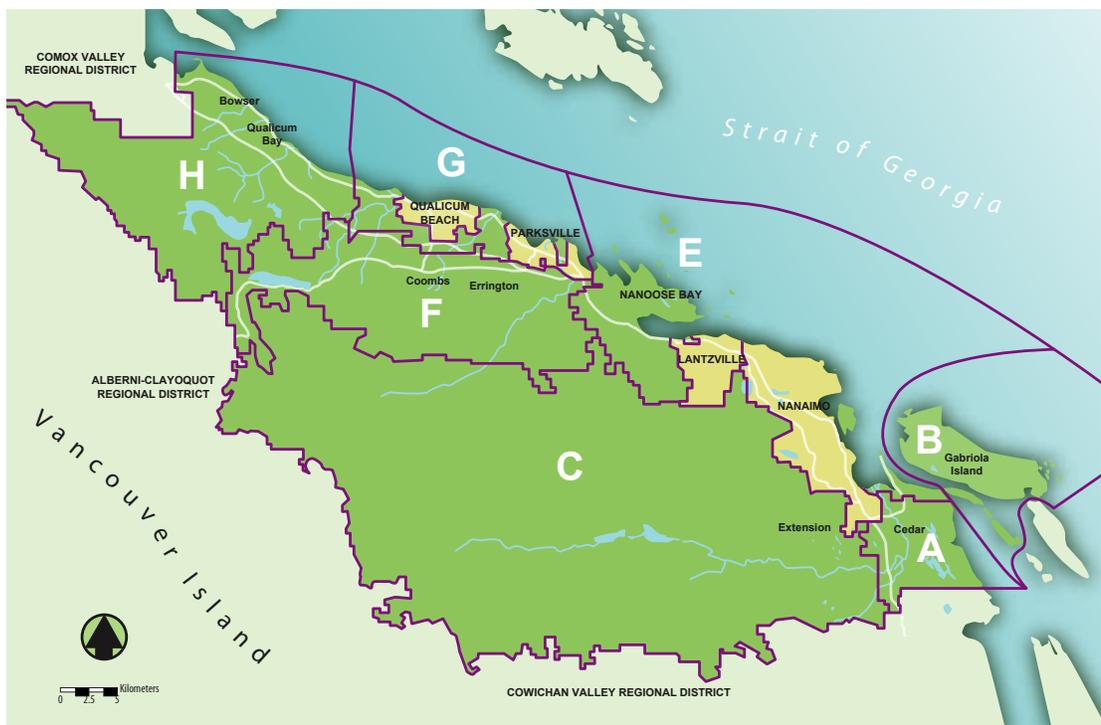
The Regional District of Nanaimo is situated within the traditional territory of several First Nations, including three that have villages and other lands under their jurisdiction: Snuneymuxw, Snaw-Naw-As and Qualicum First Nation. The Board recognizes the rich cultural history of the region’s First Nations, and is committed to developing positive working relationships to the benefit of all residents of the region.

As a local government, the Regional District of Nanaimo is a regional federation of four municipalities and seven electoral areas.

The four municipalities are the City of Nanaimo, the City of Parksville, the Town of Qualicum Beach, and the District of Lantzville.

The electoral areas are:

- A: Cedar, South Wellington, Yellowpoint, Cassidy
- B: Gabriola, Decourcy, Mudge Islands
- C: Extension, Nanaimo Lakes, East Wellington, Pleasant Valley
- E: Nanoose Bay
- F: Coombs, Hilliers, Errington, Whiskey Creek, Meadowood
- G: French Creek, San Pareil, Little Qualicum
- H: Bowser, Qualicum Bay, Deep Bay



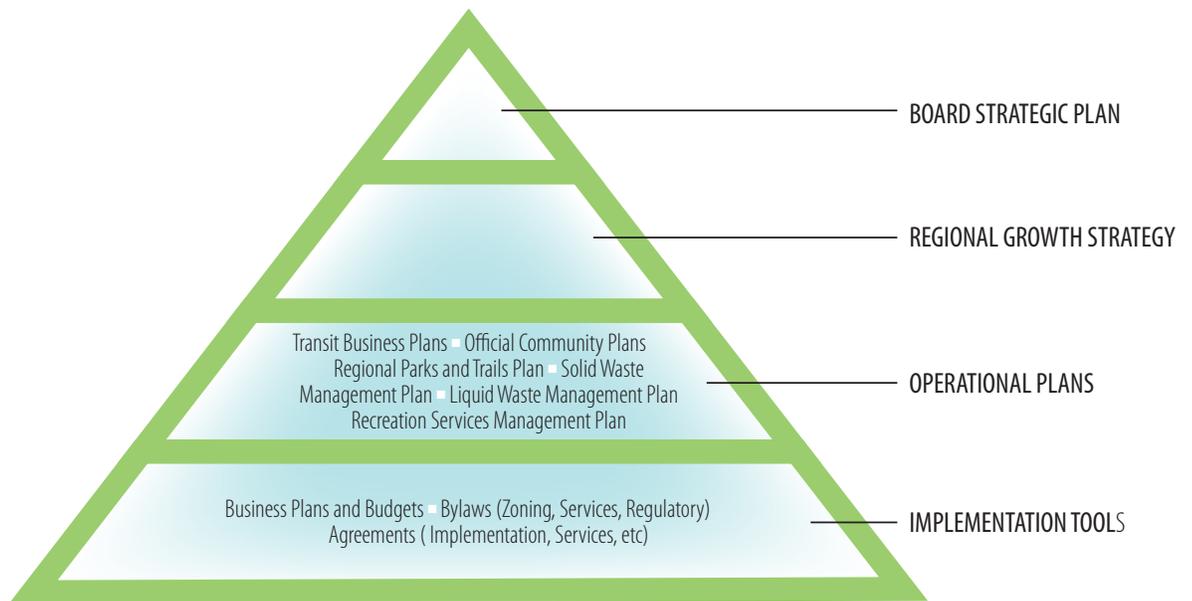
RDN Electoral Areas
  Municipalities within the RDN
  Other Regions

## THE BOARD STRATEGIC PLAN

Each successive Board of Directors participates in a strategic planning session shortly after local government elections where each director voices their top priorities, issues and concerns to be considered over the next three years.

The resulting Board Strategic Plan outlines the fundamental purpose of the RDN as a regional local government, while also outlining the overall direction the Board intends to take the organization over the current term of office.

The Board Strategic Plan is therefore the highest level plan for the RDN. The ideas expressed here flow through all aspects of the RDN's work, as outlined in the diagram below, and provide the framework for action over the immediate terms.



### Integrated Approach to Planning, Policy Development and Implementation



## TOWARD REGIONAL RESILIENCE

Regional resilience means strength in the face of inevitable change. Regional resilience comes from an ability to find opportunities in changing circumstances, to adapt and thrive in new conditions, and to withstand or recover quickly from adverse events.

### ***Where does change come from?***

Changes in environmental, social and economic conditions are the result of individual, day-to-day actions that accumulate over time, punctuated by unpredictable large-scale events that trigger sudden change. Our aim is to find the opportunities that inevitable change brings, to ensure adaptability, and to reduce the impacts of negative change on residents.

### ***What are our strengths?***

Built on a tradition of hard work, free-spiritedness and a willingness to embrace challenge, our communities are home to the residents, business-owners students and community leaders needed to navigate through an unpredictable future.

We are also fortunate to live in an extraordinary place, with inspiring landscapes, and abundant natural resources.

Our citizens, our communities and our environment are our greatest strengths, and offer the greatest potential to attract new residents and new investment to the region.

### ***Overcoming our vulnerabilities.***

The region is attractive to retirees. At the same time, limited opportunities for meaningful employment and a lack of housing diversity may prevent working age families from moving into or remaining in the region. The result is a higher proportion of elders than most communities in BC. Focusing on the advantages, this translates into a large potential network of volunteers and active community members, and residents with lifetimes of accumulated wealth and wisdom. Encouraging innovative approaches to caring for elders in our communities, from housing options and health care to recreation and transportation alternatives will generate opportunities for community and economic development.

Beyond the region, we are often reliant on support from senior levels of government. This introduces unpredictability in the availability of essential resources. An equally important unknown orients around implications that could arise from the settlement of First Nation treaties. Minimizing these vulnerabilities hinges on maintaining collaborative relationships based on mutual understanding and respect.

Globally, climate change and an escalating likelihood of economic disruption present risks to our local environment, business communities and social fabric. Overcoming vulnerabilities originating at this scale depends on infrastructure designed around anticipated environmental conditions; effective institutions that can endure structural shifts in politics or the economy; and an openness to innovation that enables creative problem solving.

## **Recognize, Influence, and Adapt to Change**

In the context of regional planning, day-to-day Board decisions represent incremental progress toward the Board's vision. Individually, these decisions seem small, but taken together they gradually shape the region in profound ways. Gradual, incremental change is how the Board exerts the most influence over the region and determines how we respond to more major, 'seismic'-scale shifts.

Using water as an example, we recognize that if the region's water supply diminishes faster than it is replenished, we would face eventual disaster. We know our population is growing but our understanding of the Region's water supply is limited. We can work to gain better information about our water supply, and we can adapt by using less water more efficiently. If we work now to influence more conservative behavior, increase our knowledge and understanding and build efficient infrastructure, we will reduce potential impacts and adapt successfully to new conditions.

## **Implement the Necessary Actions**

Taking direct action to implement regional plans and policies can be challenging, but it is how the Board makes desired change happen. Implementing regional plans often demands tough decisions, particularly when costs are felt immediately but the benefits of implementation are felt over many years. It is these tough decisions that must balance immediate need against long-term benefit, recognizing that the legacy we leave to the future is based on the actions we take now.

## **Monitor and Report on Progress**

To continuously improve in our work, and maintain the confidence and trust of our residents, we can set targets for our work, take action to meet those targets, and communicate the results of our actions to the public. This will allow for greater public understanding of our work, increase our ability to make good decisions, and clarify our responsibilities to current residents and our obligation to future generations.

**If a decision  
doesn't require  
courage, it's  
probably not  
the one  
that counts.  
-G. Price.**

RDN Board Strategic  
Planning Session



## VISION

This vision provides a description of the region we intend future generations to inherit. The vision for the RDN looks to the year 2050, describing what we hope to see in the key areas of environment, society, and economy by then.

### **The RDN in 2050**

Our region is environmentally, socially, and economically healthy; resilient and adaptable to change. Residents of the region meet their needs without compromising the ability of future residents to do the same.

#### ***Our Environment***

Ecosystems are healthy and productive, and regionally significant ecological features are protected. Land and natural resources are used efficiently and best practices maximize community benefits while minimizing negative environmental impacts. All residents have a safe, sufficient supply of drinking water. Water is also available for industrial and agricultural needs. Regional agricultural practices contribute ecological services and provide residents with fresh, locally grown food. The air is clean and safe to breathe. A focus on renewable energy has made the region more self-sufficient. The region is on track to meet emission reduction targets and is adapting well to ongoing environmental change.

#### ***Our Society***

The region is a community mosaic where diversity and heritage are recognized and respected. Most residents can meet their basic needs with accessible transit and services, including schools, shops, workplaces, cultural and recreational opportunities, and social services. A range of housing types provide affordable, accessible options for residents. The region's population is healthy, and healthcare services and facilities are available when needed. The region is a safe place to live and residents are respectful of one another. There are a wide variety of opportunities for people to interact with each other and nature, and the region's history is acknowledged, celebrated, and preserved.

#### ***Our Economy***

The economy of the region is thriving. It is diverse and resilient, growing within the capacity of the region's resources, and supportive of a healthy environment. Educational programs provide training suited to gainful employment in the region, encouraging students to stay and invest in their communities. Industry is active in the region, including businesses focused on new approaches to traditional sectors of the regional economy, and entrepreneurs capitalizing on emerging sectors. Tourism is supported by the region's commitment to maintain and preserve our historic and natural resources. Consumers in the region are knowledgeable and environmentally responsible, and it is affordable to live and work in the region.

## MISSION

The mission of the Regional District of Nanaimo Board is to enhance the environmental, social, and economic well-being of the residents and communities in the region by providing services that are best delivered on a cooperative, region-wide basis; by providing a range of community services in unincorporated electoral areas; and by acting as the Local Government for the region's electoral areas.

In fulfilling this mission, the Regional District of Nanaimo plays two major roles:

**1. To facilitate the development of collaborative strategies and plans to guide the provision of services, including but not limited to the:**

- Regional Growth Strategy
- Official Community Plans
- Solid Waste Management Plan
- Liquid Waste Management Plan
- Drinking Water/ Watershed Protection Plan
- Regional Parks, Trails and Recreation Planning
- Transit Business Plan
- Community and Corporate Energy and Emissions Plans
- Emergency Preparedness Plan

**2. To deliver a wide range of services at the community, sub-regional, and regional levels to support the implementation of these plans, including but not limited to:**

- Creating, maintaining, and enforcing regulations for land use and buildings
- Providing solid waste collection and disposal services
- Operating wastewater collection and treatment facilities
- Operating drinking water, stormwater, and streetlight utilities
- Acquiring, establishing and maintaining regional and community parks and trails
- Operating recreational facilities
- Developing and delivering recreational and cultural programs
- Delivering public transit service
- Providing fire and emergency services
- Exploring alternative and innovative energy supply systems within the region
- Working with stakeholders to address regional housing affordability
- Managing operations, planning, and administrative activities in a fiscally responsible manner
- Measuring, monitoring, and reporting on performance



## BOARD VALUES

To ensure a consistent, objective approach to decision-making, the Board has collectively affirmed a set of core values that seeks to balance the immediate, practical matters that make up the business of regional governance with the long-term vision for the region.

- **Have Vision and Courage.**  
An increasingly unpredictable future will require courage to take bold actions to realize our vision for a resilient region.
- **Respect the Environment.**  
Recognition and respect for the environment underlies our decisions.
- **Show Fiscal Restraint.**  
Through the annual budgetary cycle, the Board will ensure prudent use of tax dollars, delivering services expected by residents of the region as efficiently as possible.
- **Be Fair and Equitable.**  
Appropriate service levels should be available to residents, and the costs for those services should be shared as fairly as possible among those who benefit.
- **Represent the Interests of the Region.**  
We seek objectivity in decision-making to equitably represent the region as a whole, and we approach other levels of government as a united body.
- **Be Transparent and Accountable.**  
We are committed to openness and clarity about decisions and transparency in financial reporting. Board members are accountable to the public.
- **Collaborate and Communicate.**  
We will improve public involvement in the decision-making process by facilitating public engagement, listening to stakeholders, and considering diverse viewpoints. We will report on our activities and progress toward regional goals.
- **Work Effectively as a Team.**  
To achieve a common vision, we will cooperate and collaborate across jurisdictions, maintaining an open dialogue based on mutual understanding and respect.
- **Be Responsive.**  
We will be informed and prepared in order to respond to the needs of the region in a timely manner, prioritizing projects and activities that advance residents' well-being.
- **Anticipate and Act.**  
As a proactive organization, we will monitor regional trends, access the best information available, and aim to prevent problems before they arise.
- **Focus on Solutions.**  
We will balance innovation and ingenuity with practicality and efficiency in pursuing a productive approach to problem solving.

We overestimate  
what we can  
accomplish in  
a year, but we  
underestimate  
what we can  
accomplish in  
a decade.

-G. Price.

RDN Board Strategic  
Planning Session



## Part 2

### BUILDING ON SUCCESS: IMPLEMENTATION

The mission of the RDN is to plan for the future of the region and implement our plans with action on-the-ground.

The actions outlined in this plan are intended for the current term of office to advance the region toward our vision, consistent with our mission, and build on success stories to date.

The map below highlights projects across the region that are worthy of special mention for the benefits they provide to residents, and for demonstrating leadership in planning, implementation and real-world innovation. The 2012-2015 Strategic Plan intends to continue this tradition of leadership and success.

REGIONAL DISTRICT OF NANAIMO  
'Working Together for a Resilient Future'

#### Regional Projects and Initiatives

-  Regional Transit Expansions:  
Curbside Organic Collection
-  Regional Growth Strategy Adoption;  
Green Building Incentive Program;  
Agriculture Area Plan
-  Regional Water Budget Project;  
Surface Water Monitoring;  
Groundwater Level Observation Wells
-  Island Corridor Foundation; Trail  
by Rail Initiative; District 69 Youth  
Strategic Plan



## STRATEGIC PRIORITIES AND ACTION AREAS

The Strategic Priorities and Action Areas identify the key areas of focus for the Board's current term of office. The Strategic Priorities identify the overarching themes for the Board's current term of office and represent cross-cutting issues that touch on all aspects of RDN work. All departments work together to address these priorities in the context of their specific areas of focus.

The Strategic Priorities for 2012–2015 reflect an evolution from a focus on sustainability to one of regional resilience. Integral to these strategic priorities are the concepts of taking responsibility for our own success, adapting to change, planning to meet long-term needs, and monitoring our progress as we strive to reach our goals.

The Action Areas reflect the traditional structures within the RDN, and describe the specific objectives and actions to be undertaken by RDN departments to advance regional resilience and work toward our vision.

### Strategic Priorities

- Self Sufficiency
- Regional Collaboration
- Economic Viability
- Monitoring and Communication

### Action Areas

-  The Regional Federation
-  Strategic and Community Development
-  Transportation and Solid Waste
-  Regional and Community Utilities
-  Recreation and Parks



## STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

### Self-Sufficiency

Taking responsibility to provide for our own needs where we can reduces our reliance on others, generates economic opportunities within the region and makes the region more resilient to changes that originate from elsewhere. Implementing strategies to meet our own needs for energy, water, and food will also allow us to adapt as local trends shift over time.

As an organization responsible for regional transportation; water, waste water and solid waste management; land use planning and parks and recreation, the RDN has an enormous role to play in building more efficient infrastructure and energy systems and more self-sufficient communities.

#### Objectives

- To support efficiency measures that reduce water and energy consumption, and develop innovative, clean, and renewable energy supplies throughout the region;
- To protect and enhance the biodiversity and overall health of the region's ecosystems, thereby protecting the quality and quantity of drinking water resources;
- To work with each local government and electoral area to reduce emissions and meet provincial and global targets for emission reductions while generating benefits for the region;
- To manage waste responsibly, implementing innovative solutions where appropriate; and
- To support sustainable agricultural practices in rural and urban areas, where appropriate.

### Economic Viability

A viable local economy is a strong, diverse, and vibrant, but is also based on practicality and feasibility. We will seek out opportunities to advance sustainable approaches to the traditional sectors that built the regional economy—notably resource development and agriculture—while also supporting new sectors and opportunities to diversify employment and address regional economic trends. The RDN will build local capacity to capitalize on the transition to a stronger, more efficient economy.

#### Objectives

- To support the development of economic and employment opportunities that meet the needs of a diverse population at different stages of life;
- To build on the existing competitive advantages of the region to increase the stability of the regional economy;
- To provide high quality services in a cost effective manner, respectful of the impact of taxes on residents;
- To support independent and regionally based employers across a range of sectors, recognizing that stable, meaningful employment is essential for social and economic resilience;
- To strengthen the local agricultural economy so that local food systems are productive and viable, and contribute to the cultural identity of the region; and
- To build local expertise in green building, renewable energy technologies, materials, and processes; and responsible stewardship of resources.

## **Regional Collaboration**

Solving today's challenges in a manner that treats unique communities in the region fairly demands collaborative approaches, creative thinking and a commitment to ensure that benefits are shared as broadly as possible across the region. Recognizing common interests will encourage regional collaboration and produce results that strengthen social networks and expand participation in civil society.

### ***Objectives***

- To encourage regional dialogue on topics affecting all residents, including housing, transportation, employment, water supply, waste management, among others;
- To identify local differences in necessary services, and to recognize service provision within the region as varied yet balanced, rather than as one-size-fits-all;
- To engage residents in problem-solving to generate ideas and to understand needs; and
- To recognize the importance of social inclusion and social equality in working toward regional resilience.

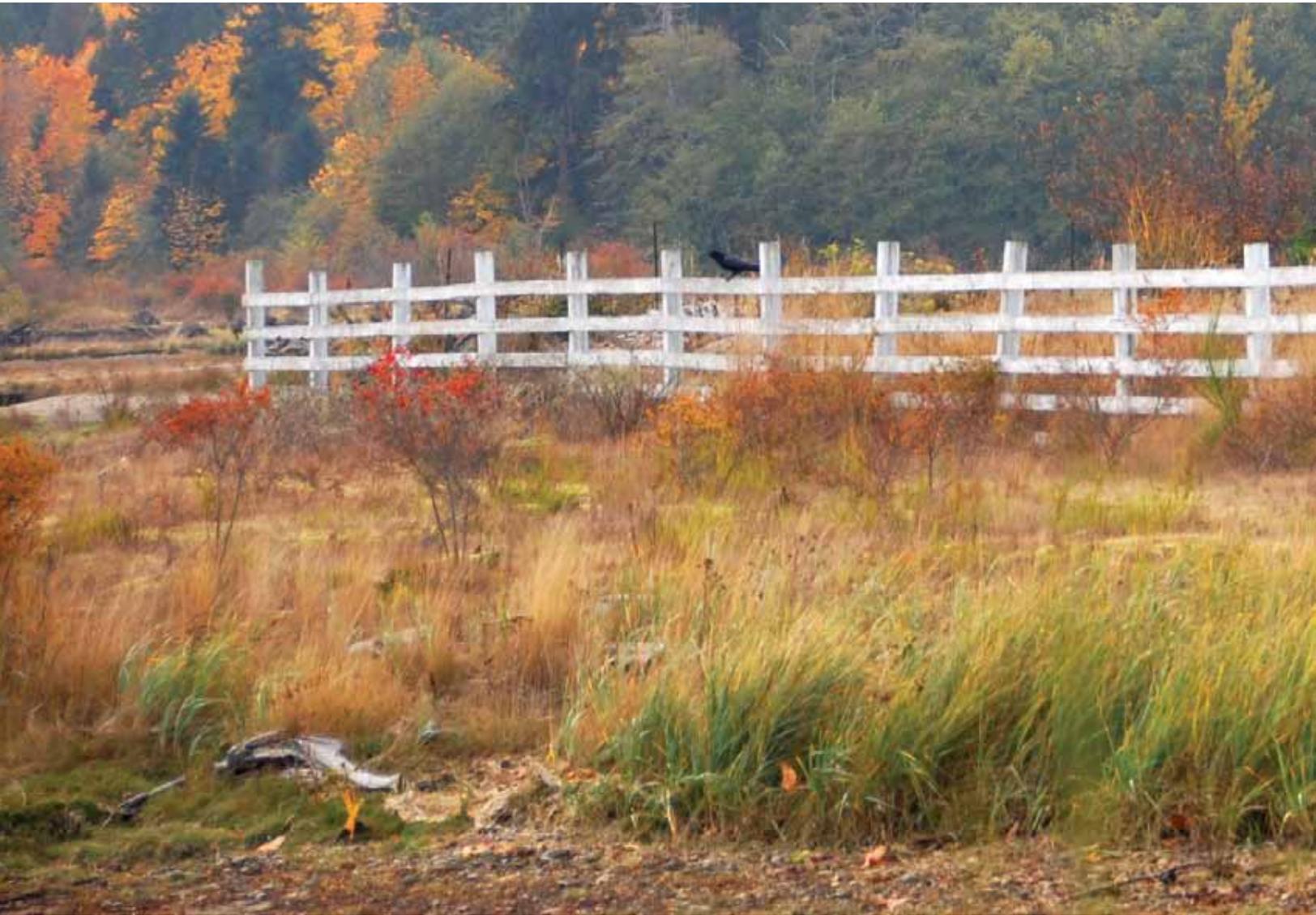
## **Monitoring and Communication**

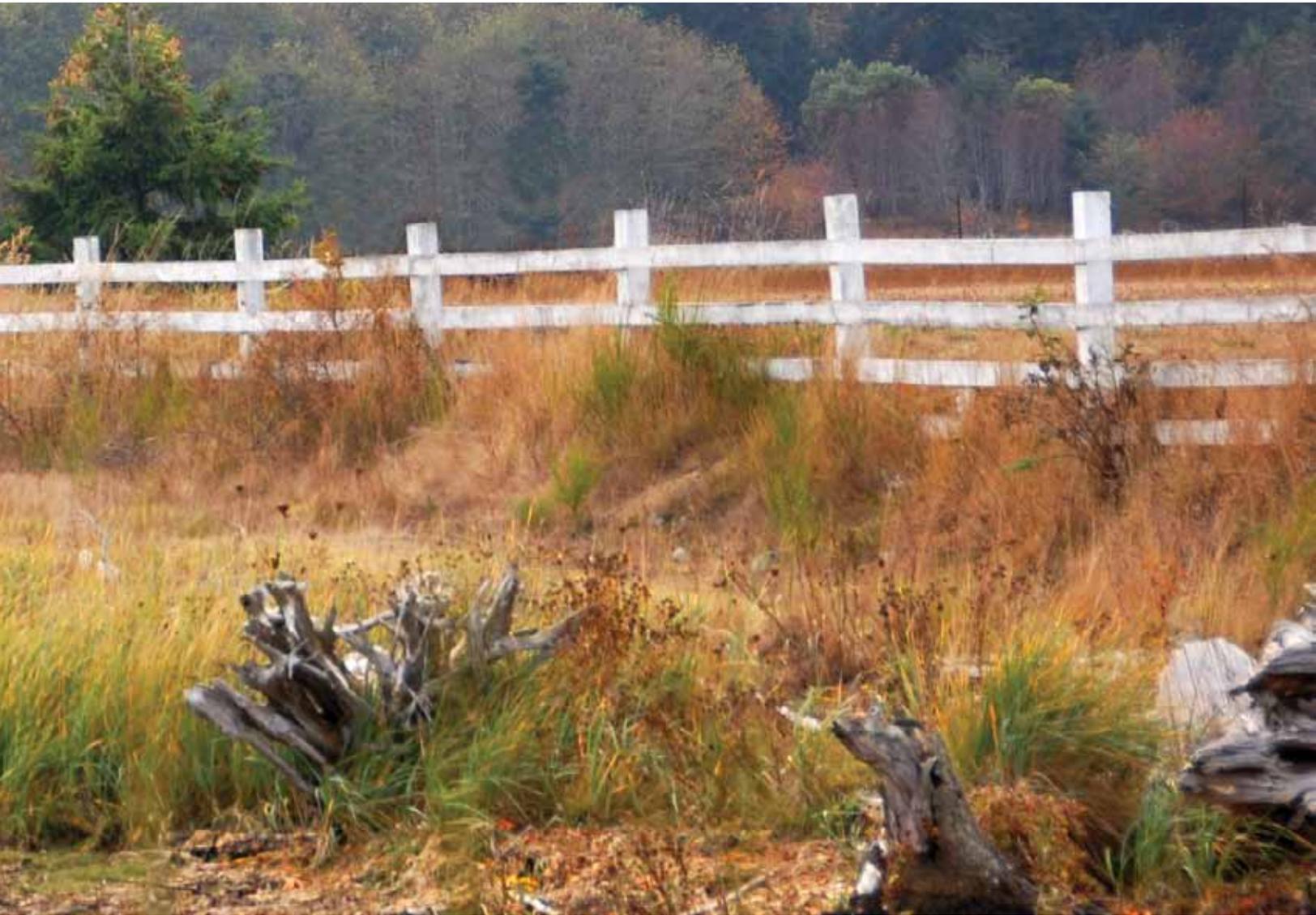
Monitoring progress is necessary to determine the effectiveness of our actions. Projects can be measured against criteria or targets that highlight their intended effects. Over time, such measurements demonstrate which actions are most successful. When monitoring reveals limited progress, we can adjust our actions or undertake different projects that will be more effective.

Communicating progress within the RDN organization, with municipalities and electoral areas, and with residents will elevate awareness and encourage dialogue on key issues. Sharing our progress beyond the region will strengthen our commitments and inspire other regions to follow our lead.

### ***Objectives***

- To set disciplined targets for our work, and to monitor and report on our progress in meeting those targets;
- To ensure that resources are dedicated to those efforts that offer the greatest promise in bringing together human development and environmental systems in mutually supportive ways;
- To be transparent about how we undertake projects and the results that are achieved; and
- To generate awareness about the good work being done by the RDN, and encourage other jurisdictions to build on our learning.





Englishman River Estuary Lands



## ACTION AREAS

The five Action Areas elaborated below reflect each of the RDN departments. The actions provide a balance between specific and general direction to RDN staff tasked with planning for and administering the region's broad range of services.



## THE REGIONAL FEDERATION

### Context

**A Cooperative Federation:** The RDN is a federation of four municipalities and seven electoral areas that benefit from working together on key issues and service provision.

**Regional Perspective:** The success of the region is dependent on working together and taking a regional perspective on issues. Our commitment to collaboration results in effective responses to regional challenges. We strive to meet the immediate needs and expectations of residents while maintaining a focus on the long-term vision for the region.

**Incorporation:** As they grow, some electoral areas may find it beneficial to incorporate and provide their own services rather than participate in RDN services. This process must consider the full impacts of the costs and benefits of incorporation on residents.

**Communication:** The RDN uses several communication methods to report on regional activities and initiatives and to raise awareness about key issues and programs we offer.

### Current Plans and Initiatives

- Regional Service Reviews — Periodic Regional Service Reviews ensure equity and fairness in the funding and governance of regional services, and aim to provide the broadest possible benefit to communities and residents in the RDN.
- Economic Development — Two new economic development functions (Northern and Southern Economic Development) have been established to attract businesses to the region, and to support initiatives that provide economic benefits to regional communities.
- Innovative Planning — RDN undertakes research and updates master plans with innovative approaches to regional planning. Plans include: the Regional Growth Strategy; the Drinking Water/Watershed Protection Action Plan; Liquid and Solid Waste Management Plans; the Transit Business Plan; the Agricultural Area Plan; and Corporate and Community Energy and Emissions Plans.

### Regional Federation Strategic Goals and Actions for 2013-2015

#### 1. Balance the RDN's vision for the region and pursuit of innovation with fiscal responsibility.

- a) Work together to implement initiatives that advance regional resilience. Acknowledge the importance of leadership in undertaking these initiatives.
- b) Ensure that increases to the costs of existing services are kept to a minimum, and that consideration of increased service levels balances the need for fiscal restraint with residents' needs and desires, and Board vision, values and priorities.
- c) Demonstrate fiscal responsibility by undertaking long-term financial planning, and protecting and maintaining assets.
- d) Track and report progress toward achieving goals and objectives.

- e) Explore interdepartmental opportunities to find synergies and increase efficiencies. Reduce waste and costs by sharing documents digitally.
- f) Seek opportunities for provincial and federal grant funding for RDN infrastructure projects.

**2. Strengthen the working relationships between municipalities and electoral areas in the RDN and increase operational effectiveness through cooperation.**

- a) Enhance cooperation between municipalities and electoral areas through the regional district model by supporting regional functions and service agreements, and using a collaborative approach to identify and address regionally significant issues.
- b) Foster a cooperative working environment between staff at the RDN and in the region's municipalities.
- c) Acknowledge the diversity in the region's lifestyles, needs, expectations, and priorities, and find creative ways to achieve goals while respecting the unique needs of each local area.
- d) Collaborate with municipal partners to develop local emission reduction projects that contribute to carbon neutrality for local governments while benefitting local residents.

**3. Enhance relationships between the RDN and adjacent regional districts, senior levels of government and First Nations.**

- a) Facilitate effective dialogue about matters of mutual interest between the RDN and adjacent regional districts, and between the RDN and other orders of government including First Nations.
- b) Seek collaboration and funding opportunities with senior levels of government.
- c) Create venues for meaningful dialogue between municipalities, electoral areas, and First Nations on land use and planning issues that have mutual implications.
- d) Build a shared understanding of legal and constitutional issues facing First Nation communities.

**4. Enhance the reputation of the RDN as a valuable and effective level of government for delivering services, exploring regional issues, and creating opportunities for dialogue with residents.**

- a) Engage residents and other stakeholders about RDN decision-making and progress toward regional goals and objectives.
- b) Reinforce recognition of the RDN in communications to increase RDN presence in municipalities and electoral areas.
- c) Work with local educational institutions to identify innovative solutions to regional issues.
- d) Support volunteer opportunities for residents.
- e) Ensure communications and consultation priorities are aligned with this Strategic Plan's purpose and direction.

**5. Enhance the Board's ability to have open, balanced and informed discussions on issues prior to making decisions.**

- a) Provide opportunities to discuss complex issues and explore the full range of opportunities for solutions that may exist.
- b) Use committees to help understand and resolve contentious issues.
- c) Focus on decisions that achieve incremental change for the better over the long term, but also consider the implications of unpredictable large-scale or "seismic" shifts.

**6. Achieve increased clarity on future expansion of municipalities and incorporation of electoral areas.**

- a) Provide information on the costs, benefits, and challenges of incorporation as community interest in incorporation grows.
- b) Examine incorporation in the context of the Regional Growth Strategy, community infrastructure expectations, and the population and density thresholds needed to support municipal services.



## STRATEGIC AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

### Context

**Green Development:** There is growing support for more sustainable development and “green building” policies and technologies. As official community plans are reviewed, creative opportunities exist to designate areas for green development. Consider the benefits of working with the development community to make neighbourhood development projects “model” sustainable community projects.

**Environmental Protection:** Protection of the natural environment within and around the communities in the RDN is critical to maintain water supplies, ecosystem integrity, and livability.

**Community Self-Sufficiency:** Efficiency and conservation for energy and water, renewable energy sources, local approaches to agriculture, waste recovery, and many other innovative approaches will enhance regional resilience and sustainability. The ability to respond to and manage emergencies at the local level is another key aspect of self-sufficiency.

**Housing:** Affordable and accessible housing are issues across the region. A variety of housing options can attract young families to the region, allow elderly residents to age in place, and offer transitional homes to vulnerable residents.

**Homelessness:** Increasing our communities’ capacity to address homelessness is a priority we can achieve with strong partnerships among member municipalities, supported with funding opportunities from the Vancouver Island Health Authority.

**Industry:** Employment and industrial activity are important for economic resilience. However, many residents are concerned about the impacts of industrial development on watersheds and rural areas.

**Managing Regional Growth:** Effective growth management remains one of the most complex challenges in the region. A factor in growth management is density, which is needed at levels that support infrastructure costs, services, businesses, transit and transportation alternatives across the region.

**Local Agriculture:** Agriculture has a rich history in the region and remains an important contributor to the local economy, culture, and landscape. Maintaining agricultural opportunities is a key feature of regional resilience and sustainability

### Current Plans and Initiatives

- Regional Growth Strategy Implementation Plans
  - Alternative Forms of Rural Development Study
  - Village Centre Study
  - Industrial Land Supply and Demand Study
  - RGS Targets and Monitoring
- Agricultural Area Plan
- Community Energy and Emissions Planning
- Regional Renewable Energy Plan
- Regional Carbon Reserve Program
- Secondary Suite Study
- Cedar Main Street Design Project
- Green Building Action Plan
  - Green Building Incentive Programs

## **Strategic Goals and Actions for 2013-2015**

### **1. Promote initiatives and policies that contribute to regional sustainability and community resilience.**

- a) Implement the Green Building Action Plan to promote innovation and efficiency in the construction sector, and to advance skill development in the region.
- b) Retain and attract youth and young working families with high quality services and amenities, and policies that support a thriving business community and affordable, accessible housing.
- c) Use design guidelines to protect ecosystem health in new developments.
- d) Implement policies to address affordability, water conservation, energy efficiency and emissions reduction through development permit areas and other means.
- e) Use outreach and communications to increase understanding of growth management issues and sustainable community development policies and practices among the public, the media, and the development industry.
- f) Monitor and report on sustainability performance across the region.

### **2. Implement the Regional Growth Strategy.**

- a) Incorporate the Regional Growth Strategy vision and principles into official community plans across the region, recognizing the importance of containing growth effectively.
- b) Encourage higher residential density on land inside the growth containment boundary.
- c) Encourage neighbourhood development projects within the growth containment boundary to become models for more sustainable urban or village developments and implement a program to recognize examples of excellence.
- d) Establish performance targets to monitor how development across the region is consistent with the Regional Growth Strategy.

### **3. Increase affordable, adaptable housing to support all members of a community.**

- a) Build on the Regional Housing Affordability Study to promote the development of affordable housing and housing that supports aging in place for seniors.
- b) Lobby senior governments to provide resources and support for affordable housing, seniors' housing, and transitional housing.
- c) Develop region-wide strategies, incentives and options for increasing residential density in current and planned neighbourhoods to increase the cost-effectiveness of infrastructure, services and transit.
- d) Work with VIHA, member municipalities and other non-profit organizations to establish partnerships and build capacity to address homelessness in the region.

### **4. Improve community self-sufficiency with energy conservation, renewable energy initiatives and regional emission reduction projects.**

- a) Engage the public with communications and public education on the issues of climate change, energy management, and air quality.
- b) Develop regional emission reduction projects that retain carbon tax dollars in the region, and provide benefits to residents.
- c) Identify potential clean and renewable power supply sources, ways to increase overall energy efficiency, and ways to reduce air quality, particulate matter, and greenhouse gas emissions.



- d) Look for partnerships and funding from the federal and provincial governments, BC utilities, non-profit agencies and other organizations to support the development and implementation of innovative projects.
- e) Investigate options for the RDN to develop an energy utility to harness alternative energy opportunities in the region.

**5. Promote approaches to industrial development that minimize negative impacts and support sustainable communities.**

- a) In consultation with the municipalities, electoral areas, industry, senior governments and other stakeholders, develop strategies to effectively manage the growth and the impacts of industry. Strengthen relationships with resource companies and other industries.
- b) Work with industry to minimize negative environmental impacts, particularly on water resources and ecosystems, and maximize positive community impacts, including a focus on jobs for youth.
- c) Preserve forest lands and watershed integrity in rural areas, and explore regulatory tools to manage watersheds.

**6) Recognize agriculture and aquaculture as important contributors to the regional landscape, culture and economy and continue to support the viability and productivity of these industries.**

- a) Take actions to overcome the barriers and constraints to agricultural production in the region and explore opportunities to strengthen local food production.
- b) Increase public knowledge and awareness of agriculture and aquaculture in the region through education, marketing and outreach.
- c) Prioritize and implement recommendations from the Agricultural Area Plan.
- d) Review the RDN's regulatory framework to ensure policies and bylaws support local agriculture and aquaculture, and revisit the RDN's policy for reviewing Provincial Agricultural Land Reserve Applications.
- e) Build a shared understanding of the role and purpose of the Agricultural Land Reserve, as well as its legislative framework.





## TRANSPORTATION AND SOLID WASTE

### Context

#### *Transportation*

**Transportation Priority:** Regional transportation planning and design should be structured around mass transit, cycling and walking over the automobile in order to be more efficient and affordable.

**Transit Provision:** The RDN manages the region's transit system in partnership with BC Transit. Public transportation options include conventional transit buses equipped with bike racks and wheelchair/scooter-accessible ramps, and HandyDART buses for residents with disabilities.

**Land Use and Transportation Options:** The viability of regional transit is closely tied to the patterns of land use and density of development across the region, particularly between residential areas and areas with high employment or school concentrations. Similarly, walking and cycling as modes of transportation are easier when distances between home, school, work, shops, and services are short.

**Geographical Challenges:** The RDN transit system serves a large geographical area; most homes are concentrated in urban centres separated from lower-density rural areas that stretch along the coast. Overcoming this challenge requires creative approaches to transit that include standard services complemented with smaller community routes.

**Transportation Alternatives:** Transportation produces the largest share of the region's greenhouse gas emissions. Reducing transportation emissions involves offering residents the opportunity to choose alternatives such as walking, cycling, bus and rail, and ensuring that regional infrastructure supports the use of alternative fuels for vehicles, including biodiesel, ethanol, compressed natural gas and electricity.

#### *Solid Waste*

**Zero Waste:** The RDN is a leader in solid waste management, approaching a diversion rate of 70% in 2012. This rate, which equates to an annual disposal rate of 360 kg per capita, represents diversion from residential, commercial, and construction/demolition waste sources in the region.

**Product Stewardship:** The Recycling Regulation was amended in 2011 to shift responsibility for managing packaging and printed paper from local governments to producers. This ensures environmental considerations are incorporated into product design. The RDN will play a role in the transition to full product stewardship.

**Education and Outreach:** Encouraging an overall reduction in the amount of waste disposed is a priority for most local governments. As an experienced Zero Waste leader, the RDN will continue to educate residents, develop effective marketing strategies and share lessons learned with other local governments to influence behavior and reduce waste across BC.

**Waste-to-Energy:** For waste that cannot be diverted, there are growing opportunities to partner with Vancouver Island regional districts and the Lower Mainland to manage this residual waste stream as a resource to meet a portion of the region's energy needs.

**Long Term Waste Management:** RDN disposal facilities have a limited service life. The RDN must plan and consider future options for waste management, disposal and facility development to meet the needs of a growing population.

## Current Plans and Initiatives

### *Transportation*

- Transit Business Plan
- Targeted Pass Program
- Corporate Fleet Vehicle Replacement process

### *Solid Waste*

- Solid Waste Management Plan
- Waste Stream Management Licensing System
- Zero Waste Program
- Regional Landfill Design and Operations Plan

## Strategic Goals and Actions for 2013-2015

### *Transportation*

- 1. Continue to work collaboratively with BC Transit, municipalities, the public, and other stakeholders to provide and enhance transit service and access.**
  - a) Target transit to regional service centres and amenities, with particular focus on meeting the transportation needs of youth, seniors, and people with disabilities.
  - b) Explore the feasibility of expanding transit service in rural areas, including identifying population and density thresholds that can support cost-effective transit service.
  - c) Promote transit pass programs, such as the U-PASS program at Vancouver Island University and the PROPASS Program with large employers in the region.
  - d) Increase the comfort and convenience of public transit with enhancements to bus shelters and other transit infrastructure, with a particular focus on the accessibility of transit for youth, seniors, and people with disabilities.
  - e) Increase transit ridership with route design and timing that improves the convenience and efficiency of the transit system.
  - f) Address the need for a central transit exchange in downtown Nanaimo.
  - g) Explore cost-effective specialized services that connect residents to key destinations, such as the “movie bus,” the ferry connector, sporting events, and others.
  - h) Implement park-and-ride and bike-and-ride facilities in appropriate locations in the region.
  - i) Pursue opportunities to increase non-local funding for transit, including strategies to access federal Gas Tax transfers.



## **2. Encourage transit, walking, cycling, and other alternatives for the majority of trips.**

- a) Working with the Provincial Ministry of Transportation, encourage support of more sustainable and pedestrian-friendly street design standards that include sidewalks, bike lanes, narrower travel lanes, green infrastructure and relaxed parking requirements.
- b) Improve cycling infrastructure, such as bike lanes, lockers, and lighting.
- c) Promote public education about the benefits of walking, cycling and taking transit.
- d) Work with school districts and municipalities to promote walking, cycling, transit and school buses as primary ways for students to get to and from school.
- e) Enhance transportation options to increase the mode share of transit, walking, and cycling to meet emissions reduction goals.
- f) Undertake transportation demand management programs to reduce reliance on the automobile, and encourage high-occupancy automobile travel.

## **3. Promote energy efficient, low-emission vehicles and green infrastructure.**

- a) Encourage BC Transit to increase vehicle fleet efficiency and performance through consideration of new technology and the use of clean or renewable fuels.
- b) Explore opportunities for smaller, flexible, neighbourhood-scale shuttle buses as part of the regional fleet.
- c) Purchase efficient and alternative fuel vehicles for all RDN departments wherever practical and affordable.
- d) Support efforts to allow electric vehicles in the region, including regulatory reform, policy development, transportation planning and infrastructure deployment.
- e) Promote design standards for ecologically friendly rain and stormwater management on streets and parking areas.

## **4. Support increased rail, marine, and air transportation between the region and other areas.**

- a) Protect the E&N Corridor for transportation and utility uses through the Regional Growth Strategy, OCPs, and zoning bylaws.
- b) Support a vision for the highest and best use of the E&N railway corridor that complements the region's sustainability goals.
- c) Ensure coordination between the region's transportation and transit systems, BC Ferries, local airports and seaplane services, and other linkages to Vancouver and other areas.
- d) Support the expansion of air travel options in the region, including the Nanaimo Airport and the Qualicum Beach Airport.
- e) Support foot passenger only ferry service between downtown Nanaimo and Vancouver, linking pedestrian and transit-oriented regional transportation systems.

## ***Solid Waste***

### **1. Review and update the 2004 Solid Waste Management Plan (SWMP).**

- a) Undertake a new waste composition study to determine changes in the regional solid waste stream resulting from the implementation of the Zero Waste Plan.
- b) Identify further opportunities to reduce waste and establish a new diversion target beyond the 70% currently achieved.
- c) Undertake a comprehensive public consultation process on the SWMP review and update to ensure that the public is engaged and supportive of new policies and programs.
- d) Explore new treatment technologies for residual wastes that save landfill capacity and investigate the need for additional future landfill capacity.

### **2. Continue to implement the Zero Waste Program on the basis of regulation, collaboration, education, and enforcement.**

- a) Ensure private and non-profit waste management and recycling facilities licensed under the Waste Stream Management Licensing Regulation are operating in accordance with approved operating plans.
- b) Expand the commercial food waste ban to include front-of-operations food waste collection systems at fast food restaurants and cafeterias.
- c) Extend the green bin food waste program into multi-family residential developments.
- d) Support provincial product stewardship programs for electronics, small appliances, printed paper and packaging, ensuring a smooth transition to extended producer responsibility.
- e) Explore opportunities for satellite recycling stations or one-stop eco-depots that handle the full range of products regulated by provincial stewardship programs.

### **3. Implement education and outreach programs to influence behavior and reduce waste.**

- a) Participate on the proposed National Zero Waste Marketing Council to develop and implement national strategies designed to reduce the solid waste stream in Canada.
- b) Collaborate with other local governments on Zero Waste campaigns using free advertising copy and graphic designs.
- c) Enhance communications and public education on the importance of waste management, composting, and recycling.
- d) Collaborate with Vancouver Island regional districts and the Lower Mainland in their waste management efforts.

### **4. Implement the Design & Operations Plan at the Regional Landfill.**

- a) Complete a Nature Park on the closed portion of the Regional Landfill.
- b) Examine the feasibility of new capital projects, and implement necessary projects incrementally to optimize costs while meeting the needs of a growing population.
- c) Continue with landfill gas collection and energy distribution initiatives.
- d) Explore opportunities to encourage industry, municipalities, and stakeholders to develop a regional eco-industrial network pilot project to reduce waste and increase economic performance by turning waste into resources.



## REGIONAL AND COMMUNITY UTILITIES

### Context

**Water Supply:** Public concern over protection of the region's water resources has increased in the past decade, particularly regarding the protection of the region's groundwater resource. The region's watershed areas encompass multiple jurisdictions making water a shared resource.

**Efficient Use:** The water supply is accessed by many users, including residents, industry, and agriculture. The RDN seeks to efficiently meet user needs while minimizing environmental impacts from drawing on this resource. The RDN is developing an information base about water supplies in the region to assist in making decisions on development and growth. Investment in innovative practices and a culture of conservation are necessary to supply water to the expanding population, as water resources are finite.

**Watershed Approach:** There is an increased awareness regarding the need to adopt a watershed-based approach to water supply management that looks at water and wastewater as part of an interconnected system.

**Services and Systems:** Expectations are increasing for the provision of publicly owned and managed sewage collection and treatment systems that result in a high level of effluent treatment. Innovative systems offer opportunities to reclaim heat, reuse byproducts, and recover useful resources from sewage treatment processes that improve costs, provide renewable energy, and result in enhanced environmental performance.

**Growth and Maintenance:** Work is underway on major upgrades and expansions to the region's wastewater infrastructure. There is also an increasing interest in undertaking development in Rural Village Centres, where density and population thresholds are critical to ensuring cost-effective infrastructure systems.

**Provincial Role:** The Province is looking to local governments to assume increased responsibility for sewage systems, including privately owned systems, through liquid waste management planning.

### Current Plans and Initiatives

- Liquid Waste Management Plan Review
- Nanoose Bay Water Treatment Plant
- Englishman River Water Service Joint Venture
- Drinking Water and Watershed Protection Program

## **Strategic Goals and Actions for 2013-2015**

### **1. Continue to develop progressive and efficient water management systems across the region.**

- a) Develop clarity on the region's water resource and its ability to accommodate growth. Study the water resources in the region in association with the Regional Growth Strategy, with special attention to areas under significant development pressure.
- b) Implement the Drinking Water / Watershed Protection Program in the region. Promote a watershed-based approach to community planning.
- c) Identify opportunities to collaborate on the island-wide management of water resources.
- d) Consider opportunities to establish Development Permit Areas for the purpose of water conservation, as permitted through Bill 27.
- e) Consider the affordability of water infrastructure at the parcel level as part of the planning process and management of water systems.
- f) Limit the commercialization of water and maintain public control over the water supply.

### **2. Ensure water is used in the most efficient manner possible in homes and businesses to reduce consumption and the amount of wastewater generated.**

- a) In partnership with municipalities, continue education programs on using water wisely. Continue the Team WaterSmart education program and build support region wide for these programs.
- b) Review the effectiveness of water use restrictions to decrease water use during seasons when water supply is limited.
- c) Promote innovative options and opportunities for sustainable water use, including the use of rainwater and greywater and the capture and infiltration of stormwater.
- d) Work across departments and jurisdictions, and involve VIHA and the Ministry of Environment to explore opportunities for composting toilets, rainwater capture, greywater reuse, and natural treatment systems.
- e) Identify options for federal and provincial funding to support innovation and for infrastructure upgrades, including those required by the Province.

### **3. Continue to improve the quality of treated wastewater in the region**

- a) Complete the Liquid Waste Management Plan review.
- b) Consider effective and affordable options for wastewater treatment for Rural Village Centres, including smaller, decentralized facilities.
- c) Explore resource recovery opportunities to maximize the effective reuse of treated wastewater and biosolids.
- d) Anticipate regulatory changes in required treatment levels.
- e) Explore ways to reduce or eliminate odour from wastewater operations.
- f) Improve septic systems through monitoring and education. Provide a septic system information and user guide to purchasers of properties served by septic systems and continue the SepticSmart program.



## RECREATION AND PARKS

### Context

**Extensive Outdoor Opportunities:** The region offers a wide range of excellent parks, trails, and outdoor recreation opportunities. There are currently 12 regional parks covering 2061 hectares, distributed throughout the region and 180 Electoral Area Community parks covering 589 hectares.

**Meeting User Needs:** A wide range of recreation and community centres distributed throughout the region provide services to meet the physical, social, cultural, and health needs of residents. Service provision is aimed at striking a balance between regional and community needs in terms of location, access and fees, with special consideration given to ensuring access for seniors, youth, and people with disabilities.

**Environmental Ethic:** Conservation, wildlife preservation, and watershed protection are key concerns in the region. Park management practices can assist the RDN to meet regional and community environmental objectives.

### Current Plans and Initiatives:

The RDN is currently implementing completed management plans at Regional and Community Parks throughout the region, and undertakes initiatives each year to better serve residents with park and recreational programs that encourage healthy, active living and enjoying the outdoors.

Looking forward, the RDN will be developing and updating Management Plans for several Regional and Community Parks:

#### Regional Park Management Planning

- Moorecroft Regional Park
- Little Qualicum River Regional Park
- Beachcomber Regional Park
- Descanso Bay Regional Park
- Benson Creek Fall Regional Park

#### Community Park Planning

- Huxley Community Park – Electoral Area ‘B’
- Anders Dorrit Community Park – Electoral Area ‘C’
- Meadowood Drive Community Park – Electoral Area ‘F’

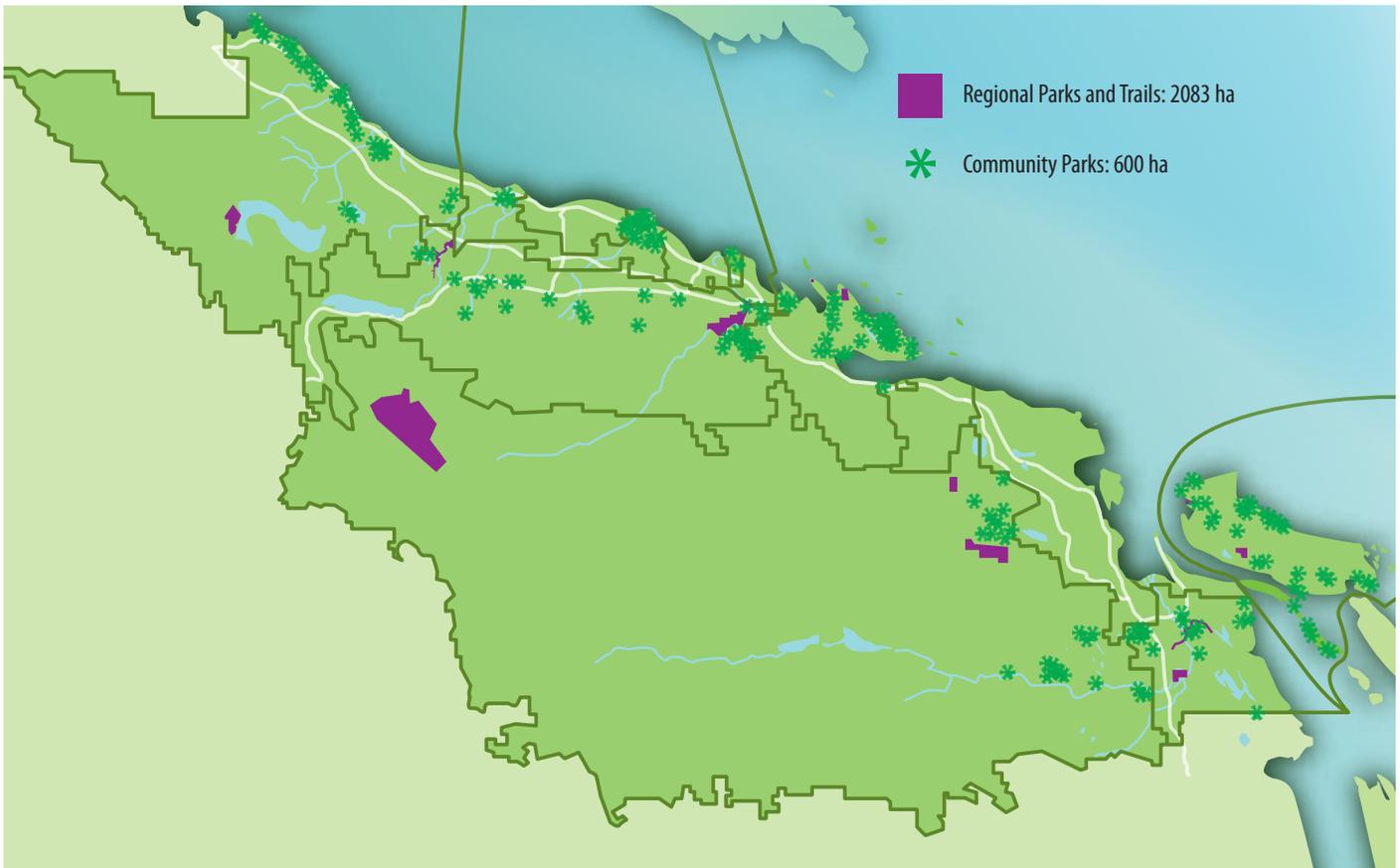
#### Recreation and Recreational Facilities

- Recreation and Sport Tourism Strategy
- Track and Sports Field Project Review (District 69)
- Ravensong Pool Use Survey



## Regional and Community Parks and Trails

The Regional District of Nanaimo parks system has grown remarkably since 2005, with regional and community parks and trails now approaching 2,700 ha. Especially noteworthy are the establishment of the 1,300 hectare Mount Arrowsmith Massif Regional Park in 2010, and the acquisition of Camp Moorecroft in Nanoose Bay as a regional park. With 184 community parks, 12 regional parks and 7 regional trails, the RDN continues to offer residents extraordinary opportunities to get out, get active and enjoy the RDN's stunning natural environment.





## Strategic Goals and Actions for 2013-2015

### 1. Develop existing parks and trails as guided by management plans and acquire new parks as funding and resources permit.

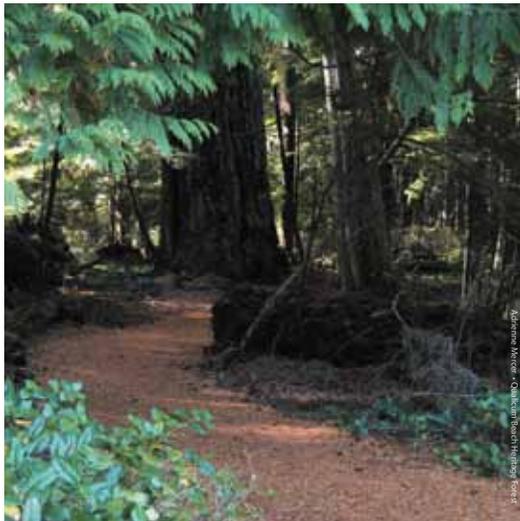
- a) Harmonize the RDN's parks strategies and plans with the Regional Growth Strategy, official community plans, development permit areas, conservation areas, and zoning.
- b) Implement the Regional Parks and Trails Plan to respond to new park and trail needs and opportunities.
- c) Review and update the Regional Parkland Acquisition Plan to consider emerging opportunities such as watershed protection and carbon sequestration.
- d) Seek opportunities for funding support and partnerships to acquire high-priority acquisition areas for parks. Density bonusing, transfers, and other tools may be used to support the provision of park and open space amenities.
- e) Evaluate the long-term benefits of park acquisition against the ongoing costs of operations and maintenance.

### 2. Promote innovative plans and management practices for RDN parks and recreation facilities.

- a) Ensure a diversity of parks that meet recreational as well as conservation objectives.
- b) Develop Community Parks and Greenway Standards and Strategies for the Electoral Areas.
- c) Develop a parks programming strategy to enhance the recreational experience and opportunities for the region's increasingly diverse population.
- d) Complete park plans for select electoral community parks as resources permit prior to development of the site.
- e) Incorporate innovative environmental practices in parks management, including carbon sequestration, low emission management practices, and pilot projects for off-grid infrastructure.
- f) Explore possible funding opportunities, including estate or monetary donations, a memorial program, advertising, user fees, vendors, sport and cultural events.
- g) Review recreational service provision on lands and facilities owned by school districts, member municipalities, and other organizations.
- h) Review and implement applicable recommendations from recreation service master plans and studies.

### 3. Increase public awareness of recreation and parks opportunities and the environmental benefits of parkland.

- a) Ensure accessibility in recreational facilities and provide transit connections to facilities.
- b) Promote recreation facilities and parks as an asset to the tourism industry in the RDN.
- c) Continue education and communication programs on parks and protected areas to enhance public knowledge and an ethic of stewardship of our shared natural resources.
- d) Use the Conservation Area designation to protect wilderness areas and other ecological benefits through controlled human access and minimal maintenance.





## CONCLUSION

This Strategic Plan proceeds from the firm belief that our residents, our communities and our environment are our greatest strengths. Our actions must be dedicated to maintaining the confidence and trust of our residents, strengthening the resilience of our communities, and protecting the health and integrity of our local ecosystems.

The Board recognizes the importance of working in a collaborative manner to achieve these results. As the highest level plan for the RDN, it provides direction to all work, informing the approach taken by RDN staff in all departments, on all projects, and in daily operational activities.

Aligned with the Board's current term of office (2013-2015), Working Together for a Resilient Future focuses on the immediate actions to be undertaken by RDN departments. Guiding pragmatic and prudent short-term actions is a long-term vision that ensures decisions made today will move the region along the path toward a desired future. Departments will report on the Board's Strategic Priorities to demonstrate organization-wide progress on issues that affect all areas of RDN responsibility. By undertaking key actions that advance Board priorities and reporting on outcomes, we will be able to track our progress toward greater regional resilience.

The RDN Board of Directors has the responsibility of preparing the region for the future while meeting the needs and expectations of current residents. Building on our strengths – our residents, our communities and our environment, we know we can adapt to change and thrive. We are committed to the actions necessary to demonstrate local government leadership, and we will ensure that the Regional District of Nanaimo remains one of the most desirable places in Canada to live.





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