

Subject:Update on Island View Beach Regional Park

Date:Wed, 9 Mar 2016 20:15:25 -0800

From:Fof IvBeach <friendsofislandviewbeach@gmail.com>

We are writing to give you an update on Island View Beach.

CRD staff prepared a draft plan that was put before the Regional Parks Committee on February 17, 2016. As many of you are aware, we had grave misgivings about the CRD process during 2015, and you can see our numerous letters to the CRD in 2015 calling on them to check their data at <http://www.friendsofislandviewbeach.com/letters-to-the-crd-in-2015.html>

We can repeat this newspaper story from **2013** because nothing has changed:

Information, or at least the totality and accuracy of it in the initial “draft interim” plan are at the heart of some of the criticism.

“Almost none of the claims made in the draft interim plan withstood scrutiny and it is difficult to understand how so many incorrect statements could be made accidentally,” said Jason Austin, spokesperson for the Friends of Island View Beach, a group of concerned stakeholders in the park’s operation.

For example, said Austin, the plan identified at-risk species within the park without stating where those species reside and what measures are needed to preserve them.

“To our astonishment we found there did not even appear to be an accurate inventory or mapping of what is there,” said Austin. “To proceed on a park plan without a park inventory and mapping is like building a house without foundation.”

The CRD is aware of the problems.

“We’re going to be reviewing those (criticisms) — check them all out and make sure everything in our report is accurate,” said Ward.

A lack of public input is another point of contention and again it appears the criticism may be well founded.

The Nov. 20 report to the Parks Committee revealed that Elevate Consulting, retained to “provide support for the public engagement process,” reported that “due to an absence of a randomized method of collecting input and the (low) number of participants ...the results are not statistically valid.”

<http://www.vicnews.com/neighbourhoods/sidney/233048491.html?mobile=true>

The difference is that in 2013 the CRD acknowledged the mistakes. In 2016 they acknowledged this tacitly, because the latest draft plan does not even make reference to the highly questionable presentations the

CRD made to the public during 2015. Instead it introduces concepts that the CRD never mentioned to the public:

- The "restoration of a Coastal Sand Ecosystem" - no description of what this means, why it is needed, or what it would cost the taxpayers
- The intent to classify 68% of the park as an Environmental Protection Zone, but no evidence was given during 2015 that this is an environmentally sensitive area
- The intent to negotiate with the Province to regulate dogs on the public beach, which lies outside the park.
- To ban horses and cyclists from the park

It makes a mockery of wasting all of 2015 in "*public consultation*". Presumably a box had to be ticked to say they had consulted, and they made us pay for the pleasure at a reported cost to the taxpayer of \$34,500.

The errors in the presentation and process through 2015 were so well known that we thought the CRD Parks Committee would refer the draft plan back to staff, but instead a majority voted to send it out for public comment. Parks Chair Mike Hicks made a number of insightful comments that showed he had researched and understood the issues. And Central Saanich Mayor, Ryan Windsor, stunned everyone with his brilliant and forceful summing up of the problems with the draft, concluding "*This is not a balanced plan*". Five members of the Friends of Island View Beach also addressed the Committee. The videos of these can be seen on our home page at<http://www.friendsofislandviewbeach.com/>

The reason some of the CRD Directors are giving for pushing on with this process despite the obvious flaws with it, is that it has taken so long - it is now in its 6th year! **Those Directors need to consider WHY it has taken so long.** The process for the new plan officially began in January 2011, and CRD staff announced then that a new plan would be put in place by June 2011. Staff had intended to fill in the mosquito drainage ditches, and remove the sea wall to encourage sea water flooding of the park, the private lands, and the Tsawout lands. When this became known, local farmers and others banded together as the Island View Ditch & Mosquito Committee, and Central Saanich Council became actively involved, and all insisted the mosquito drainage ditches and the sea wall be kept, as is required in the existing park by-law. The CRD went away for two years, then returned in 2013 with a draft plan. Two years! But that 2013 draft was so riddled with exaggerated and misleading claims, it was hard to see how they could have been accidental. See <http://www.friendsofislandviewbeach.com/misleading-claims.html>. So the CRD withdrew their plan and went away for another 2 years, returning in 2015 with the questionable public presentations. And now another year later they are back in 2016 with another draft. **You have to ask - how can this take so long???** **- and how can they still get it so wrong after all this time??!** In our view, the process in 2015 was far worse than in 2013. There is nothing factual on which to base a park plan, and the misleading, exaggerated claims are even worse than 2013. What seems unforgiveable, is that the CRD were warned repeatedly of most of these problems before they put on the public presentations.

The CRD has owned Island View Beach Regional Park for 50 years, and still can't come up with an accurate assessment of what is in the park; where it is; or if it needs protecting.

<http://www.friendsofislandviewbeach.com/letters-to-the-crd-in-2015.html> That is why this process is in its 6th year, and this is where the CRD Directors should be looking. This was supposed to be an evidence-based plan. Had it been, the public would have been on side without the need to sell the plan, and without all these wasted years, and without the wasted public monies.

Mike Hicks predicted there would be a public uprising against the plan, and he was right - people are outraged. An online petition at <http://www.thepetitionsite.com/107/068/758/leave-island-view-beach-regional-park-alone/#sign> has over 470 signatures; there are another 300+ signatures on a parallel paper petition, and scores of emails have been sent direct to the CRD Directors through our web site at <http://www.friendsofislandviewbeach.com/email-the-crd.html>

You be the judge:

(a) Is it OK for the CRD Directors say "*Oh well, sure there have been problems, but we are tired of it, and it has taken too long, so we are going to wrap it up*".

(b) Or should they acknowledge the delays were caused by the CRD, and present an evidence-based, factual and scientific environmental assessment, so the public can make thoughtful and informed presentations to the CRD about their wishes for the park?

We are gathering more information and will get back to you as soon as we can.

If you have not already signed, the online petition is on our web site at www.friendsofislandviewbeach.com/

You can also email the CRD directors from there.

Thank you.

The Friends of Island View Beach.

PS Members of the public who have written direct to the CRD protesting the proposed plan have been receiving a mind blowing response from the CRD saying in part:

Little has changed regarding the proposals for public access in the park. Visitors will be allowed in the same areas as they are now. In fact, the draft plan proposes to increase access in the park by developing new trails and making some parts of trails easier to walk on by putting in boardwalks.

Wow! We will write separately about this letter and you can judge for yourselves if that is accurate or not.