

Island View Beach - how the proposal might effect you

We began this as a narrative to take you on a literary tour through the park, to explain how the proposed new park plan may effect you. As we worked on it we realized we were also having to explain the reasons, or their lack, behind actions, and the more we looked at it we saw this may be the perfect vehicle to not only comment on the plan but also give our insights into it and its history. In doing so this has become long, and we hope that those of you who are passionate about Island View Beach will take the time to read this, and follow the links.

The draft plan, now approved by the CRD Regional Parks Committee, goes to the full CRD Board on July 12th for their consideration - this is next week. The process is now into its 7th year and decisions are being made out of fatigue and frustration. It is important that all people, including the CRD Board, make sober, informed decisions.

The latest CRD **2017 June draft plan** documents can be seen [by clicking here](#)

Some people have been finding the proposed plan difficult to understand, so let us take you on an imaginary walk through the park. Before we start, here is the good news for all park users.

There will now be two day use areas - the existing one in the south will be "no dogs", and a new dog friendly day use area will be created on the sea side of the north parking lot. This is a plus for dog owners and non-dog owners alike. This was a recommendation by the Friends of Island View Beach and the Capital Region Dog Owners.

We begin our journey at the end of Island View Road.

If you have a dog you have a big problem right away - the south end day use area has been made a "no dog" area with [no provision for dogs to transit through](#) on leash/on path. We checked with CRD staff and were told this is the intent - that people with dogs cannot transit along that path, and must either walk along the beach or walk along Hamathko Road all the way past the campground. That is 500m!! This makes no sense - it is understandable to make the grass off limits to dogs, but to deny dog owners the ability to transit through on the path is absurd.

So one way or another we get ourselves to the north end of the camp ground. There we see what will become the dog friendly picnic area. Staff have told us the ground will be leveled.

Keep walking to where the path comes out from the top end of the north parking lot. Look carefully, because from this point right up to the Tsawout boundary, the CRD intend to prohibit you from accessing the beach except in two places, one by the north bench, and the other further up. The CRD claim they own the beach to the "normal high tide line", and we question that - the test is the natural boundary where the sand meets brown organic soil, which is mostly along the edge of the berm. As far as we can determine, the CRD does not own any part of the beach they propose to ban you from. We told the CRD about this months ago and said they

should get a surveyor in, but they pushed ahead with this draft plan without a survey, which is not smart if we are right. Another problem they have, is that Central Saanich actually owns a large chunk of the shoreline - see the [shoreline map](#) and [determination of a coastal boundary](#)

The CRD plan to build a fence from this point along the toe of the berm. The Chair of the CRD Parks Committee said this fence is "silly" because it will get washed out in the first storm, but he voted for it anyway. CRD staff have not disclosed the cost of this fence that will be washed away in the first storm, nor have they indicated if they intend to keep replacing the fence each time it gets washed away.

You will be asking why do they want to do this? Officially it is to do a sand restoration to protect species at risk in the area. The catch is that no one has inventoried what species at risk are there, or even if they need protection. Now you might be asking what will this sand restoration cost for these unknown plants? Well, that is unknown too - they are closing the beach without an inventory of what special plants are there; they do not have a plan for the work; and they have no idea of the cost! This is crazy you say? We agree, and it does not stop there.

After you have finished giving your head a shake, keep walking north past the outfall. On your right is the beach they want to block you from - wave goodbye to that. Now look left to the west. They want to ban you from that scrub land too. Yes, our head is shaking too - there is nothing of significance there - in fact the Victoria Natural History Society wanted to flood this area with salt water. The CRD in their wisdom however deem you unworthy to set foot in this scrub land that 50 years ago was a farmers field where you can still see the fence posts, and that has been walked over by people like you for the last 50 years without doing damage.

Keep walking north along the berm with the prohibited beach on your right side, and the banned scrub land on your left. Go past the north bench (we think one of the two allowed beach access points is around here.) Go down the little hill, and through the area where the logs pushed in during the winter storm of 2007. Just past there, the path begins to veer to the left, or you can continue straight to get to the beach at the edge of the Tsawout lands - well, you used to be able to go straight. They intend to ban you from this area as well - this would be as far north as you can go in the park. Why? - because they intend doing another sand restoration there too. And before you ask - no, there is no plan for the work nor has it been costed.

Think back about that long length of beach from the north parking lot, up to where you are now, where they plan to do a sand restoration. And look ahead of you - from where you are, all the way to the Tsawout fence, they want to turn this into sand. See the fir trees and other brush up ahead on the right? They intend taking all those out and converting that black soil into sand. Are dollar signs flying past your eyes at the thought of the cost of all this work? Are you asking how the CRD can present a plan that does not include a plan or cost for all this work? You should be, and the CRD Board should be. This was the situation in 2013, when the CRD came out with a plan that was missing this same detail, but was pulled at the last moment

because of the missing information on the sand restoration. Then **Parks Chair Susan Brice** wrote on November 15, 2013, saying that draft plan was being withdrawn and that:

..... plans for Island View will follow the usual course for the development of CRD Parks Management Plans which will have all aspects of the plan presented to committee in total after the usual extensive public consultation. There will not be an interim plan for this park. [our underlining]

And the [CRD staff report for the November 2013 meeting](#) said the reason the 2013 plan was being pulled was because there were four outstanding issues that needed to be addressed, the main one being "**completing a restoration plan for the sand dune ecosystem**". The **CRD Senior Manager Parks**, made a commitment that was signed off by the **CRD General Manager Parks & Environmental Services**, and the **CRD Chief Administrative Officer**, to bring back a completed plan with a complete sand restoration plan in 2015. Four years later, those same officials have now presented a plan in 2017 that still has no information or costing on the proposed sand restoration project. What gives?? Does the commitment made by the most senior CRD staff and the then CRD Regional Parks Chair have no meaning? And why has the current CRD Parks Committee not sent this plan back to staff to be detailed and costed? This proposed sand restoration project will be expensive, and involve banning the public from a large area of the park and beach, yet the scope of work is unknown, the costs are unknown, and there has not been any public consultation on it, much less the "extensive public consultation" guaranteed by former Parks Chair Brice. We told the current CRD directors about this, and not one director made inquiry. Do you get a whiff of the of the sewage fiasco all over again?

If you are not too stunned by this, continue walking straight ahead toward the Tsawout boundary and soon you will see the split rail fence. That was put in in 2007 to protect the sand based plant species at risk. What happened instead, was that [the area has become organic](#), and is now covered in grass and larger vegetation. Do you see any sand in here? No. The only sand is where people have been walking.

Look for the yellow sand verbena - a low succulent plant with yellow flowers. Do you see any inside the fenced area where people have not walked? No, because these plants need sand to grow in. Now look along the trail edges and you will see them growing - they are surviving because of people, yet the CRD propose to ban people as being harmful to them.

Things were different 100 years ago, when this was sheet sand (no dunes to speak of). In 1919 the [Daily Colonist](#) reported that there was 100' of sand on the beach. and another 500' of sand below the high water mark. And the [1926 aerial photo](#) shows the clean white sand that existed then. All [that 500' of beach sand has gone](#), and because it has gone, there is no longer any makeup sand blowing up on this north east corner to keep the sheet sand intact. Any plan to recreate this as sheet sand will be fighting nature - without a constant source of replacement sand, this area will always revert to organic where the sand based species at risk cannot survive. So why is this being proposed? And why is this draft plan being put forward without a plan for the sand restoration for the beach or the north east? And why are no costs

presented for this proposed work? The commitment was made in 2013 that all aspects of any plan for Island View Beach the plan would be included, and the public consulted, but here we are in 2017 with no plans or costing for the proposed sand restoration on the beach or at the North east.

Are you beginning to share our serious reservations about this latest draft? We will tell you a couple of stories while you get your senses back. One of the biggest bones of contention over the years for us, has been the exaggeration of the environmental features of the park. The draft 2013 report contained [real porkies](#) and in 2014 the CRD promised a new report would be based on factual, scientific evidence. Sadly, what came out in 2015 was even worse and you can see the frustration we felt over the [misleading information](#) presented to the public. The worst was the initial claims there are 33 species at risk at the park. When we challenged these, the story became there are 33 species in and around the park, and that 9 are "confirmed resident" in the park. Most of the 33 are sea birds that come nowhere near shore! And the "9 confirmed resident in the park" included the common nighthawk; the American Glehnia, and the Fleshy Jaumea. Now the CRD made this claim in 2015, yet in 2014 they had received a report from their consultant who told them the American Glehnia, and the Fleshy Jaumea are NOT in the park. We pressed the CRD to tell us why they claim these two plants are "confirmed resident" in the park when their expert had told them the year before that they are not. We never got an answer, and to our astonishment this latest plan still claims they are resident! [See page 29 of the plan](#) What is hilarious, is the comment they put beside the entries for the two plants that they won't admit they know are not there:

Some uncertainty regarding the exact location of this species. Follow up surveys are required.

Isn't that typical CRD! - why not just acknowledge the mistake and take them off the list.

The same for the common nighthawk. This should never have been on the list of endangered species in the first place, because it is not endangered in BC. We called on the CRD repeatedly to give evidence this bird was "confirmed resident" in the park. To be resident by the way, requires a nest. The most likely nesting area for the common nighthawk is Cordova Spit, more than a km to the north of the park. Just as with the plants, we got no answer from the CRD proving the common nighthawk was "confirmed resident" in the park. The latest draft still claims it is confirmed resident, but the comment now reads:

Last nesting record in the park was 1980's. Last sighting in park was 2015. This species not tracked by the CDC.

The last nesting record was 30 years ago and they say it is still confirmed resident in the park?? ...haha The "last sighting in the park was 2015" is just as silly - that sighting was that the bird was heard coming at night from the north, circled around a few times and returned to the north. So please, why claim this bird is confirmed resident when the last nesting was 30 years ago?? We asked for evidence of that 1980 nesting record too, but were not given that either so we don't even know if that 1980 claim is correct.

It's time to tell you about the land to the west. Did you know the park extends up the hill to the west? This is another of the CRD's strange exaggerations - they call this "wetlands". Wetlands are land consisting of marshes or swamps, whereas these are meadow lands that are seasonally wet. These meadow lands were farmed from the time of the first settlers in the 1860's. As you come around the top of the loop trail and head back south keep your eyes open for a passage through the tight brush, and push your way through that. As you clear your way on the other side you will pass over the main north-south ditch, and just past that you will see one of the lateral ditches that heads towards the houses on Highcrest Terrace. Those are the [mosquito drainage ditches put in 1936](#) to control the terrible mosquitoes that breed in the park. The link gives the interesting history on these, but if you don't have time to read that, consider that the park is like a dinner plate. The natural berm around the outside shoreline is higher than the land inside, so water accumulates in the meadows during winter and spring and dries off in summer and fall. The ditch outfall is dug under the berm and has a flapper gate, that closes when the tide rises, and opens when the tide is out to let the ditch water drain out.

While you are by the ditches, consider this other [curious exaggeration by the CRD](#) about them. In its presentations to the public the CRD said these ditches have an average wetted width of 3m in winter, and 1.5m in summer. The first thing you may notice when you look at them is that the ditches are not even 3m in width, much less having that much water in them. And in summer, most of the ditches are dry, yet the CRD told the public they have an average of 1.5m of "relatively stagnant" water in them during summer. Why make this stuff up?

From where you are standing, and all the way to the north to the Tsawout boundary, the CRD have designated as an Environmental Protection Zone, yet no evidence has been shown that there is anything special in here that needs protecting. The 1987 CRD Master Park plan; the 2009 Stacey Filatow report; and a collaborative process between the main user groups between January - April 2017; all concluded that no damage has been done to the vegetation of the park by off trail use west of the main north south ditch where you are now. So why label this an EPZ? By doing so, and then declaring that people must stay on the only one trail the CRD intends to have here, the effect is the rest of the area becomes off limits to the public. In other words, the sole purpose of the EPZ is to create an exclusion zone. There is no reason why the public should not be allowed to walk off trail in this area labeled an EPZ.

When you study the [proposed 2017 CRD map](#), you will see that the CRD, by declaring this area to be an EPZ, and by declaring the North East to be an excluded sand restoration area, and declaring the land inside the coastal loop to be "on trail" when there is no trail; the cumulative effect is to exclude the public from the top 30% of the park - **they are all exclusion zones by different names**, and the public would be allowed only on trail in parts of them. No evidence has been produced by the CRD to justify this.

While you mull this over, keep walking along the lateral ditch until you encounter another lateral heading north. Follow that, and at the top of that ditch you will find a plank that enables

you to cross one more ditch. Keep walking a little further north then stop. There is a chain link fence to your left - that is the present day Puckle Farm. In the old days, Puckle Farm also extended over the area you are standing now. Look north along that chain link fence, and where it stops is the Tsawout land - across the flat lands to the north you can see the large RV park.

Does the ground feel firm where you are standing? In yet another curious manner, the CRD call the area you are standing on a "salt marsh". This is the [CRD definition of a salt marsh](#): **Salt marshes lie at the edge of land and sea, on wave-protected coasts.** They are dominated by low-lying, salt-tolerant vegetation and are laced with networks of tidal channels and pools. Salt marshes are communities of emergent herbs, grasses, or low shrubs, rooted in soils and **alternately flooded and drained by tidal action.**

Do you notice any wave protected coasts, or tidal action around you??? [This land is not a salt marsh](#), and the CRD has known this since 2012.

Retrace your steps south to the plank over the ditch, then look east along that ditch. The CRD have committed to keep the park ditches clear of debris, and to maintain the mosquito control program where the mosquito contractor walks along the ditches dipping a small container into any water to see if mosquito larvae are present. Do you think that either the ditch cleaners, or the mosquito control contractor could get along that overgrown ditch? We have called on the CRD to mow one side of all the ditches at the beginning of each year, in order to allow access for the ditch cleaning and the mosquito control contractor. An added benefit is it would provide year round walking trails as the land close to the ditch is dry.

You may be getting weary by now a and we promise to have you back to your car in about 20 minutes. What we are now going to do is look for ground nesting birds - have you seen any so far? The CRD proposes that from the April 1st through July 31st, that all dogs in the meadow lands must be on leash to protect ground nesting birds. We were part of the collaborative process that took place between January to April this year, and we are aware there are no lists of known ground nesting birds in the park. We are also aware that the type of bird is significant because some will live in blackberry thickets where no animal can find them, and others may live in open grassland and elsewhere. So just what birds is putting dogs on leash intended to protect? The answer as always is the CRD does not know. This is part of the response we received: The proposed dates and area of the seasonal dogs on-leash requirement are intended to provide a balance between provision of access and protection of breeding habitat for ground nesting birds during the prime breeding season, rather than to protect known existing nests or nesting species. The seasonal leash requirement should provide improved conditions for breeding birds to utilize this area and we are hopeful that park users will see an increased diversity and abundance of species as a result of improved stewardship.

So the restrictions on dogs is not to protect against known ground nesting birds, but in anticipation that if dogs are leashed from April 1st to July 31st in the meadow lands that this will bring birds to the park. Really? Dogs are not natural predators of birds. Does the CRD plan to have a wee chat with the raccoons, the feral cats; the American Bullfrogs; the hawks; herons, crows, ravens, rats, otters, mink, and all the other creatures in the park that really are predators of ground nesting birds? Does it seem reasonable to leash dogs in all the meadow lands for 4

months just in the off chance that ground nesting birds may defy the natural predators in the park? Look around you - the park is full of dense thickets that dogs cannot penetrate, and the ground nesting birds that nest there will never be bothered by dogs. So what species of ground nesting bird might be disturbed by off leash dogs and where is the habitat for those birds? There is no logical rationale for a blanket restriction against off leash dogs in the meadow lands. If a test is to be done, then place a restriction on a reasonable area, but not the whole of the meadow lands.

As you ponder this, continue walking back along the ditch - the chain link fence should be on your right. Turn left (east) at the next lateral ditch and follow that back to the main north south ditch - this is the way you came. When you reach the main north south ditch, turn right and follow the winding trail south. It will eventually take you out just before the north end parking lot on Homathko. The park stretches all the way to the slopes on the west, so at any time feel free to explore. And long the way keep an eye open for those elusive ground nesting birds

As you reach the parking lot, go one more time to the shore. Is this a calm day? It is not always - the beach that the CRD want to ban you from, is routinely under water during [winter and spring storms](#)

Additionally, a report done for the CRD says the whole beach will be under water in 30 years from [rising sea level](#). In other words, the CRD want to ban you from the public beach

- for an unknown scope of work;
- for an unknown cost
- that would be routinely covered by storm tides in winter and spring
- and will be permanently under sea water in 30 years

Did we mention whiffs of the sewage fiasco?

This has been a long journey, and congratulations if you made it this far. We have tried to give you some background on the park, and also on the dealings with the CRD that have gone on almost 7 years now. You will have seen our dismay that the presentations to the public over the last two years were inaccurate - we told this to both the CRD and to the CRD Directors and no one did anything. You have seen how the park plan is not based on evidence; that something else is driving this plan and we don't know what it is.

Most disturbing to us, is that the CRD Directors have made no inquiry about any substantive issue:

- we told them repeatedly that the public were being mislead - the directors did nothing;
- we warned them the CRD probably does not own the beach they want to ban the public from, and they should get a survey before proceeding further - they did nothing;
- and we warned them that this plan includes the same undocumented and un-costed sand restoration project that was the reason the plan was pulled in 2013 - and they did nothing;
- the Parks Chair has said publicly that building the fence is "silly" and it will get washed away - the Directors did nothing.

There has been no evidence, logic, or financial prudence in this process. The attitude at the Committee level seems to be that this has been that this has gone on too long and they don't care what is in the plan, they will approve it.

Everyone is tired of this, but that is no reason for not doing it properly. The Committee members pat themselves on the back for having an extensive consultation process, but it cannot be called consultation when the public was mislead - consultation requires that the public be given all the facts so they may make informed presentations. Every major commitment made by the CRD was broken: that the material presented to the public would be factual and scientific; and that all aspects of the plan would be presented in total; there would be an extensive public consultation; and there would not be an incomplete plan for this park.

Before approving any plan, the CRD Board should:

- A. Commission a survey to determine where the park coastal boundary is, and who owns the shoreline and the beach
- B. Send the draft back to staff to prepare a plan for the proposed sand restoration and a detailed costing, just as was called for in 2013 by then Parks Chair Brice.

We urge you to consider the CRD's latest plan and email the CRD Board with your opinions, whatever they may be - this is the peoples park, and only if people take the time to speak their mind, will things change. **Don't wait for the other guy to do something - they are probably waiting for you!** You can email the CRD through [our web site](#) - this will start your email program and populate it with the email addresses of all the CRD directors, then you type your own comments. If you value Island View Beach, then it is important you speak up - the CRD directors are only [a click away!](#)

Sincerely,

The Friends of Island View Beach