

# The draft interim plan for Island View Beach Regional Park

## An overview

The CRD web site claims the review of the Island View Beach management plan began in 2011, but in reality it was effectively over by then. The CRD had collaborated with the Tsawout for 5 years to produce what was called the Cordova Strategy which was released in 2010, and the draft interim plan is based on that.

### The lack of genuine public engagement

Only one public meeting was held at which the public could speak – on March 16 2011 - and there **the public told the CRD to leave the park alone.**

Although instructed by the Regional parks Committee to collaborate with the District of Central Saanich, any presentations by CRD staff to Council were limited to “process” and requests by members of Council for information were deflected.

In January 2013 a “public information session” was held in Sidney, 12 km from the park and in the middle of winter. Input from the public was not sought, and no information on the proposed plan was given. Instead it was claimed to be an “information session”.

One information board purported to list the input received from the public. That was just bullet points from the one public meeting on March 26 2011. **This board did not tell the public about:**

- The scores of emails about the mosquitoes and calling on the CRD to clean the ditches as required by their own bylaw
- At least 3 resolutions by Central Saanich Council calling on the CRD to clean the ditches and fix the breached sea berm.
- The 800 signature public petition calling on the CRD to clean the ditches
- The 500 signature public petition calling on the CRD to fix the breached berm
- That Central Saanich finally had to step in and clean the ditches in October 2011 because CRD staff did not.

In another part of the room was a map supposedly of the drainage system which staff knew to be wrong.

And another map that claimed a large part of the Tsawout flat land, the north part of the CRD lands and an adjoining private property was a “salt marsh”. CRD staff knew that was wrong.

An “information session” this was not.

The draft interim plan was not released to the public until September 2013, with the intent by CRD staff to have it confirmed by the CRD Regional Parks Committee in November 2013 and approved by the whole CRD board in December and the existing park bylaw cancelled then.

**No public meetings were held on the draft plan.** Instead the CRD held a beach walk that failed to show the bulk of the park to the west, and a drop in session at the Tsawout gym where visitors were buttonholed by CRD staff and their consultants instead of being able to hear the concerns of other members of the public in open meeting. No information was given to the public at these events about the intent to give the Tsawout a role in the future planning and management of the park.

In a meeting at Central Saanich in September 2013, members of the public complained to Council of the lack of public input. Council asked a senior CRD staffer present if the public could attend the next CRD Regional parks Committee meeting in October. The CRD staffer replied that the October meeting would not be held because there were no items on the agenda. When it was pointed out by a member of Council that the public wanted to address the CRD Regional Parks Committee on the draft plan, the staffer said the public could not place items on the agenda!

A local resident wrote to the CRD complaining of the draft plan, and concluded by complaining that the October meeting was not being held. That same staffer replied telling the person the October meeting was now being held and gave directions on how to register to speak at that meeting. A number of people opposed to the draft plan registered to speak, then the day before the meeting were all informed by the CRD that they could not speak because *“the draft plan was not on the agenda”*!! The refusal to allow the public to address the CRD Regional Parks Committee in October was a material denial of the public’s right to be heard in this process.

The CRD encouraged the public to complete a “Response form” but that was so full of loaded questions that no regard can be taken of the responses. In 2012 Geoff Young, a former Chair of the CRD, criticised conclusions drawn by staff from surveys saying: *“You can get any answer you want by the way you ask the questions.”* That describes well the CRD Response Form. It was sprinkled throughout with references to cultural heritage and values that were embedded with other unrelated matters. Accordingly, any answer on the unrelated matter could be construed as support for emphasis on First Nations values at the park, when in fact the responder may not have been aware of the extended meanings of these terms.

### **The draft plan is incomplete, incomprehensible, political, and goes outside the park boundaries**

The draft plan is incomplete in major details – it does not cover dogs, the campground, details of a proposed renovation of a small sand dune area, or administration of Central Saanich lands. Yet staff want to cancel the existing bylaw and replace it with this incomplete draft, leaving key details not to be dealt with until 2014.

Other objections to the plan are it is incomprehensible to the average reader, and its intent is masked by circumlocution. It contains inappropriate political statements. It attempts to influence events outside the park boundaries, such as interfering with property owners at the Cowichan Head and with the public boat launch.

### **Mosquitoes**

Mosquitoes breeding at the park were a terrible nuisance to park visitors and local residents for many years, requiring an expensive mosquito control program. In 2011 residents found there was a drainage

system in the park which the CRD staff were required by bylaw to keep clean but had not, and this had caused the pooling of large bodies of mosquito breeding water. Central Saanich eventually had to step in in 2011 to clean those ditches when CRD staff did not. There has been no mosquito problem since the ditches were cleaned, and it is essential those ditches be maintained in the future. The CRD now say they have committed in the draft plan to maintaining the drainage ditches and mosquito control program but the wording in the draft plan has so many escape clauses the commitments are meaningless. As far as can be determined, despite the current park bylaw instructing CRD staff to keep the ditches clean the CRD have not cleaned the park ditches in over 20 years – they have not even cleaned them completely since Central Saanich cleaned in them in 2011. They did no work in the north of the park in 2012 where the mosquito problem is worst. And in October 2013 they announced they were cleaning the ditches but did only half the ditches and in particular left the main ditch uncleaned. We have no confidence the CRD will maintain the drainage ditches and mosquito control program in the future.

**In summary, the concerns of the Friends of Island View Beach are:**

- The draft plan is incomplete in major details
- There has been no genuine public engagement, and the direction from the public to leave the park alone was ignored.
- The refusal to allow the public to address the CRD Regional Parks Committee at its October 2013 meeting was a denial of process
- The plan is incomprehensible to the average person
- There are no meaningful or believable commitments to maintaining the drainage system or mosquito control program
- The intent to give the Tsawout a role in the planning and management of the park was not disclosed to the public
- The draft plan contains inappropriate political statements

**The Friends of Island View Beach call on the CRD to put a hold on the draft interim plan - to send it back to the planners:**

- **to be completed in full**
- **written in plain language understandable by the average person**
- **with no political statements**
- **confine it to the park boundaries**
- **to disclose openly all aspects of the plan**
- **and to take the plan to multiple public meetings where the public can speak and be heard by other members of the public.**

*The Friends of Island View Beach provides a voice for responsible stewardship and sound management of Island View Beach Regional Park, for the benefit of all people of the region.*

[FriendsOfIslandViewBeach@gmail.com](mailto:FriendsOfIslandViewBeach@gmail.com)

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