

Friends of Island View Beach
Conceptual outline for a new management plan for
Island View Beach Regional Park
January 12, 2017

Preface

This is our preliminary conceptual framework for a new park plan for Island View Beach Regional Park. It is not presented as complete because although we have consulted with Capital Region Equestrians and Capital Region Dogs, there are other groups, such as Rocky Point Bird Observatory, we have not met with yet, and they may have recommendations we have not considered. And we have not met yet with CRD Park staff.

This planning process is now in its 7th year.

The CRD has had a *laissez faire* approach to the park for the last 28 years, and the park and the people evolved comfortably together without strict adherence to the existing park plan. When the public became aware the CRD was contemplating changes, **5,300** people signed a petition calling on the CRD to leave the park alone. And if the park could sign, we suspect it would have been the first signatory.

In our opinion, the sole substantive issue is climate change. Changes in temperature and rain fall, are altering conditions in the park. In turn the park is becoming less hospitable to long established plant species, which will die off and be replaced by new. Sand is no longer being deposited on shore in the north east of the park or the Tsawout lands, so the sand based plants have little future. There will be different insect and bird species. Bird migration patterns are changing. And then there is the threat to the existence of the park itself, from sea water flooding due to breaches of the berm from storm surges; and eventually to the park being permanently under sea water from rising sea level – predicted by the CRD's consultant to be in 33 years.

The first decision of a new park plan must be, do we fight nature and cling onto the species that nature has determined no longer belong in the park? Or do we look forward, and help ease into place, the species that will be at home in the park of the future?

To us there is no question about the direction a new park plan – it should look forward.

The Friends of Island View Beach
friendsofislandviewbeach@gmail.com

Overview

- Creation of a dog free zone of 27.5 acres (23% of the park)
 - Dog owners are the largest users of the park but some people are uncomfortable around dogs. We propose the creation of a substantial dog free zone, to include the existing public recreation area, and the lands to the west, and a separate picnic area for dog owners to the north.
- Climate change
 - The greatest threat to the park
- Flexible and strong environmental protection
 - Providing protection for changing circumstances over time
- Public access
 - Clarifying the areas accessible by the public
- Consideration of a seasonal wetland for migratory birds
 - Responding to a request
- Unconditional mosquito control
 - Unconditional commitments to maintain the mosquito drainage ditches and control program
- Equestrian routes maintained
- Being a good neighbour
 - Fencing, flooding, and cooperation with other berm owners
- Transfer the boat ramp and two unused half acre lots to Central Saanich
 - To make public use of the boat ramp and the two unused ½ acre lots at the end of Island View Road
- Public safety
 - Addressing safety issues on the berm
- Trails
- Maintenance – keeping it all clean

Guiding principles

Plan from the bottom up – have the goal to be a plan everyone can be proud of

Previous draft park plans have been created and then put to the public in a take it or leave it fashion, pitting users against each other. This resulted in ill will, and plans that no one was happy with. We believe that if the user groups are involved in the preliminary planning, and approach this with open minds and goodwill, that a better plan will emerge. This should be the goal - not a plan created out of fatigue that people have to hold their noses to support, but a plan that everyone can be proud of.

The whole park is special

The primary issue that has plagued previous attempts to draft a new plan, has been differing opinions on the environment in the park, and after 6 years these differences are greater than ever. We propose that the past practice of seeking species that are super special be dispensed with, and instead it be accepted that everything in the park is special.

The environment should drive the park plan

The environment should drive the park plan. We call for a high standard of research and care, when making environmental claims.

The public have the right of access anywhere in the park unless a compelling reason is shown otherwise.

Strive for flexibility

Recognize that not all situations require a black or white approach. Nature operates in cycles and seasons – for example, some planning can be done on a seasonal basis.

Recognize the resilience of the park

The area north of Lamont Road has been a public CRD park for 50 years, and no damage exists from park users. Plans should be based on actual experience, not speculation.

Recognize the park has changed and will change more

There is need for acceptance that change is inevitable and cannot be reversed

- People have changed the land over the last 160 years.
- Nature will always evolve
- Invasive plants and animal are widespread in the park and will never be eradicated
- The climate is changing rapidly and will bring rapid change to the park. Temperatures have risen and will rise more. Precipitation will change. There is increasing risk of sea water flooding. It is inevitable that some species that have existed in the park will die off, and be replaced by others.
- What was once sheet sand in the north east has become increasingly organic, and some of the sand based plants there will not survive.

All planning should be forward looking to what the park will become through climate change, not what it has been.

The beach is not in the park

The park boundary is the high water line, and does not include the beach. Nothing happens within the park that affects migratory sea birds or other aquatic life.

Nature sets its own boundaries

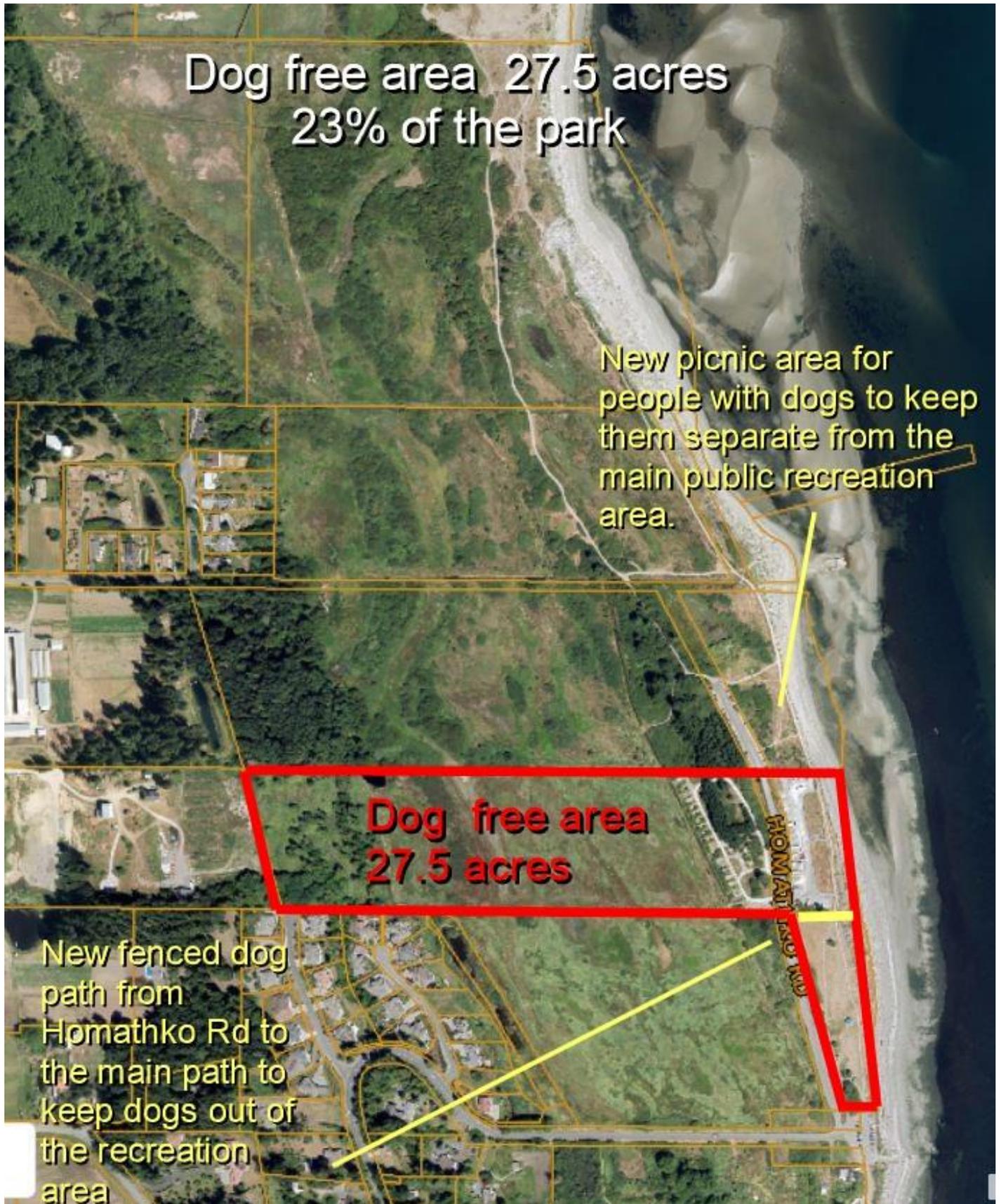
Regardless of what a plan may say about public access, the reality is that large areas of the park are covered in impenetrable brush, and, in the winter, substantial areas are impassable due to standing water. This gives animal life a lot of natural protection.

Proposals

1. Dog free zone of 27.5 acres – 23% of the park

FOIVB proposes that 27.5 acres be established at the south end of the park, as a dog free zone for the use of those who are not comfortable around dogs.

- People with leashed dogs will be allowed to traverse the north south path along the shoreline but may not stop.
- Create a picnic area north of the campground for people with dogs, to keep them separate from the main recreation area
- Put in a fenced path along the south of the campground so dogs can get from Homathko Road to the main path without going through the main recreation area
- Consider allowing dogs in the tenting area in the off season.



Dog free area 27.5 acres
23% of the park

New picnic area for people with dogs to keep them separate from the main public recreation area.

Dog free area
27.5 acres

New fenced dog path from Homathko Rd to the main path to keep dogs out of the recreation area

HOMATHKO RD

2. Climate change

As the highest priority, a study should be done of the likely effects of climate change to the park, through

- (i) the risk of sea water flooding from storm surges and sea level rise
- (ii) temperature change
- (iii) precipitation change

All planning for any aspect of the park should include detailed consideration of the impact of climate change on that plan.

3. Protecting the environment in the park

Immediate

- In the north east, fix the split rail fence and post signs, to keep people out of the Contorted-pod evening-primrose area.

During the term of the plan

- CRD Parks be authorized to fence off individual plants or small areas, that show signs of damage by park users, and, where feasible, remove the fencing when that plant or area has recovered
- Any large scale plans, including sand restoration projects or species recovery plans, be planned and costed and provided to the public for comment, and then presented to the CRD Regional Parks Committee for approval.
- Should the need arise for seasonal protection, the studies shall be provided to the public for comment, and then presented to the CRD Regional Parks Committee for approval.
- That there be an unconditional commitment to maintaining the berm

4. Public access

- The public may access any part of the park that is not fenced off to protect the environment or, during that season, is not designated as a seasonal protection area
- Dogs are not allowed in the Dog Free Zone except to pass through the two paths provided, and there they must be on leash and on path.
- Outside the Dog Free Zone, dogs may be off leash and off trail.
- Incorporate a trail to the park from Lamont Road
- Equestrians must remain on the trails provided.
- Cyclists are not permitted to ride in the park

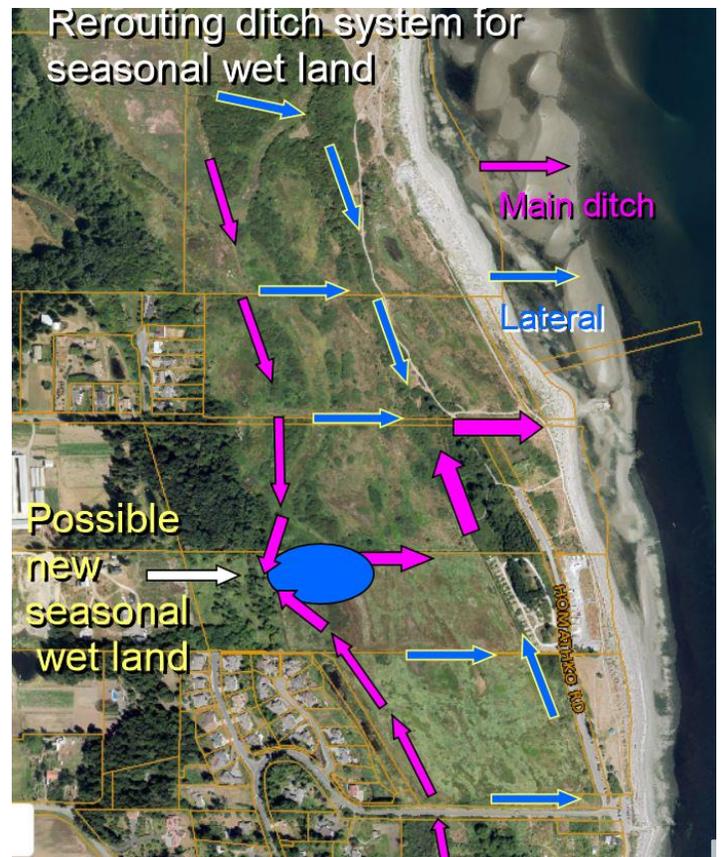
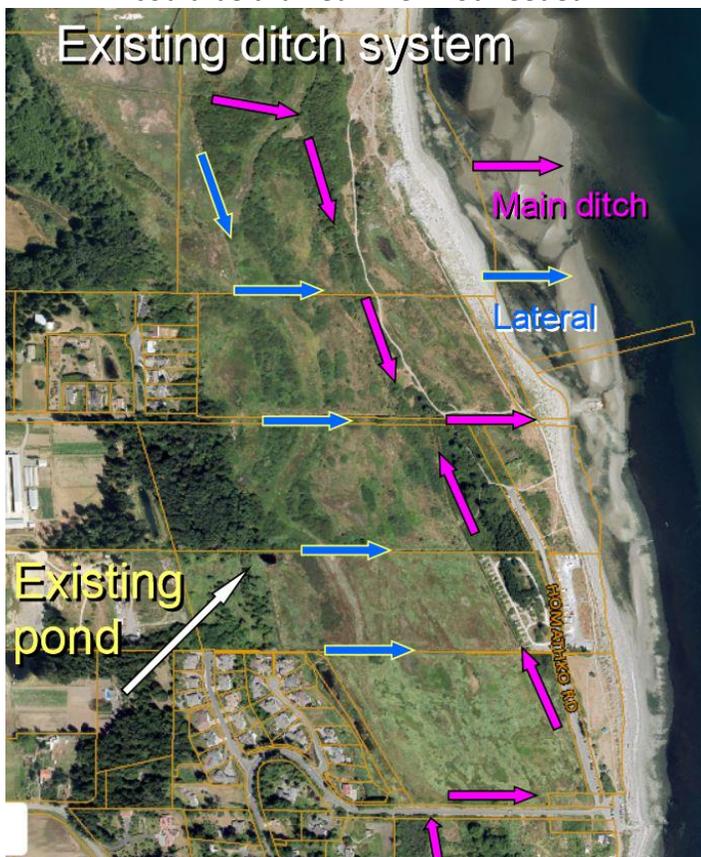
5. That consideration be given to establishment of a seasonal wetland area for migrating birds in the west side of the Dog Free Zone. We do not know the requirements for this, but offer these comments and suggestions:

Comments:

- (a) it had been suggested that a wetland could be created north of Lamont Road. This would not be practical as the land at the foot of the west slope from Lamont Road to the Tsawout lands is privately owned, so flooding the park north of Lamont would flood those private lands.
- (b) it was also suggested that the area could be kept flooded until May without a mosquito problem. The mosquito control contractor however has reported that mosquito activity starts in February in many years, and some times as early as January.
- (c) we offer a suggestion below for mosquito control. It would have to be accepted that mosquito control takes precedence over the seasonal wetland, and if a mosquito problem developed from the seasonal wetland then the seasonal wetland would need to be discontinued.

Suggestions:

- (a) an ideal place might be in the west side of the Dog Free Area. There is already a small pond there, which could be made broader by shallow excavating
- (b) we understand the seasonal wetland would be kept wet until May. To provide water to this area, and to keep the water moving to deal with mosquito larvae, we suggest rerouting the ditches from the south and from the north, so that water flows into this seasonal wetland, and then flows out to the main ditch and the seas. In our map below we show the rerouting of the ditches from both the north and south. In practice, it might be tried at first with just rerouting the south ditch which would require little work. If that did not provide sufficient water then the north ditch could be rerouted.
- (c) the depth of the seasonal wetland would need to be shallower than the ditches so it could be drained when not needed.



6. Mosquito control – unconditional commitment to maintain the mosquito drainage ditches and mosquito control program.

7. Equestrian – same route as provided in the 2016 draft plan

8. Being a good neighbour

- Install a fence on the northern boundary to prevent park visitors from straying on to the Tsawout lands
- Take action to prevent flooding of neighbouring properties through the park land
- Work with Central Saanich, the Tsawout, and the private owners of the berm to create a joint program for protection of the berm.

9. Transfer to Central Saanich the two ½ acre parcels on Island View Road. The north to be used for horse trailer parking, and the south to be used for boat trailer parking.

10. Transfer to Central Saanich the boat ramp and cash for its repair, so it can be restored as a public boat launch.



11. Public safety on the berm

Statistics provided by the CRD show increasing numbers visitors to the park, and most of them walk the berm trail.

- The path along the berm is narrow, making it difficult for groups to pass.
- The berm path is not maintained on a regular basis and has an uneven surface that is dangerous to anyone with mobility issues, and also contributes to the difficulty of groups passing each other
- At the north end where the path leaves the berm, the path is muddy and treacherous, and has a steep grade.

1. The berm path should be widened to 3m;
2. the berm be maintained on a regular basis to provide an even surface;
3. and the path gravelled where it leaves the berm at the north end, and the grade lessened.



12. Trails

- The CRD have agreed with the equestrians for a trail to be created for them
- The berm trail should be widened to 3m for safety reasons, and gravelled in the north where it leaves the berm
- The CRD has committed to maintaining the mosquito drainage ditches and mosquito control program. It is logical then to mow one side of each ditch to allow access for the ditch maintenance and mosquito control contractors, and that can also serve as public trails.
- Some beaten trails exist in the grasslands and these change their position from time to time. There has been no damage from these in the past.

13. Maintenance

- Larger and better placed garbage bins are needed along the main trails.
- Dog bag dispensers are needed on major trails in the park