

Section 1 – Executive Summary

1.1 Purpose of the Management Plan

The Management Plan is an administrative document that guides the management and operation of Descanso Bay Regional Park (DBRP) for the next five years and beyond. It sets out objectives and policies for the management of the natural, cultural and recreational features of the Descanso Bay Regional Park. This Plan sets out the roles and responsibilities for day-to-day operations and includes a capital plan, which defines proposed development actions to be undertaken within the next five years. The Plan also references some of the anticipated future actions that are proposed to be undertaken beyond the five-year period as these issues have been identified as part of the public consultation process or have been recognized as part of the ongoing operations.

The regional park is adjacent to a 45.7 ha Community Park. The management plan will discuss the community park as it relates to the regional park. Recreation and Parks staff has begun working with the Gabriola Parks and Open Space Advisory Committee (POSAC) to establish priorities for the development and management of the community park. Currently members of the POSAC and other volunteers are upgrading trails within the community park that provide a link to the regional park.

The RDN will enter into a five-year contract with a private contractor for park operations for the period from January 1, 2004 to December 31, 2008. As stated above, this Plan will provide the guiding framework for the Park Operator who is responsible for the day-to-day operations and for the RDN, who is responsible for the administrative actions as well as the implementation of those improvements, identified in the capital plan. The RDN will also be directly involved in preparing public information and promotional materials for the park and will respond to public inquiries and obtain feedback on park policies and operations. A review of the objectives and policies of this Plan and an assessment of the success of the operating contract will be considered prior to the end of the five-year term and prior to proceeding with a future five-year operating contract for the period beginning January 2009.

1.2 Management Plan Process

In 2002, the RDN acquired the Regional Park from the Coastal Community Credit Union (CCCU). The land contained the Gabriola Campground that had been operated by the Credit Union since the early 1980s. At the time of purchase, the land was subdivided into three parcels. Two of the parcels, totaling 15.8 ha in size, were purchased using funds from the Regional Park Function and were designated as a Regional Park. The remaining 45.7 ha of land was created as a Community Park and funds to purchase that portion of the property were approved by residents of Electoral Area 'B' in a community parkland acquisition that was held November 24, 2001. For the 2002 season, the CCCU hired a contractor to manage the day-to-day operations. In October 2002, the RDN entered into a contract with a park operator to manage the campground until December 31, 2003.

Development of the Management Plan has been done in consultation with various agencies and organizations including residents of Gabriola Island; the Gabriola Recreation Society (the main provider of recreation services for Electoral Area 'B'); Electoral Area 'B' Parks and Open Space Committee; Ministry of Water, Land and Air Protection (MWALP); Federal Fisheries and Oceans (DFO); Ministry of Forests; Gabriola Island Volunteer Fire Department; Gabriola Island Chamber of Commerce; BC Parks; local tourism and business community; Tourism Nanaimo; Vancouver Island Health Region; Gabriola Local Trust Committee; Electoral Area Director Gail Lund; Islands Trust trustees and staff, and the existing park operator. Recreation and Parks staff was consulted throughout the process.

Two public open houses were held on Gabriola Island. One was held June 2003 to get input into the vision, objectives and issues for the Descanso Bay Regional Park and a second open house was held October 2003 to introduce the draft Management Plan and allow residents to provide feedback as to how initial input was incorporated into the Plan and also to receive feedback from community members with regards to the draft document.

1.3 Plan Summary

The Management Plan is a policy document that guides the day-to-day and longer-term operations and administrative requirements for managing the Descanso Bay Regional Park. The Plan describes the current facilities and various natural and man-made features and facilities found in the Regional Park. Nine objectives are detailed in Section 3 and are organized in the following categories: *Accessibility, Public Safety, Environment, Park Use, Standards, Operations and Administration, Economic Development, and Cooperation*. Detailed policies have been developed for each of these categories and are found in Section 4. Section 5 outlines the operational and administrative requirements for the both the Park Operator and for the RDN and sets out timelines for fulfilling these requirements. The *Appendices* include a capital works plan and budget and detailed operating guidelines for public control and emergency procedures, facility maintenance standards, campground operations, financial and administrative management, and details the permitted ancillary uses. The operational components of the Management Plan will be compiled to develop the operating agreement for the Park Operator.