

Mill Farm Regional Park Reserve Interim Management Guidelines

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1 Context

Purpose

These Interim Management Guidelines (IMGs) provide management direction for the protection, development and use of the park reserve until a park management plan is approved. They also provide guidance on research, development, and other actions needed or anticipated in the next five years.

Mill Farm Land Acquisition

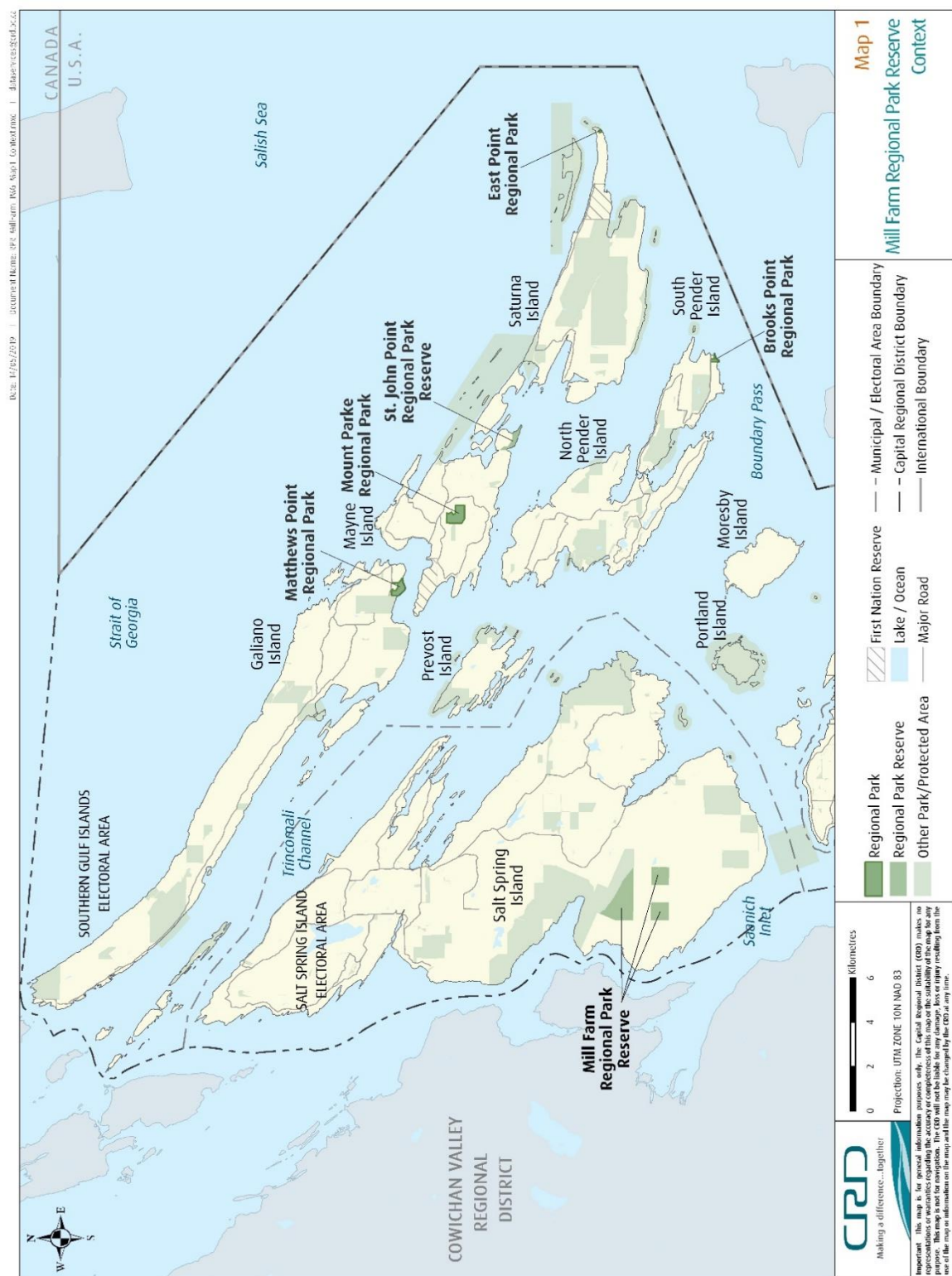
Mill Farm Regional Park Reserve is 315 hectares in size and one of six regional parks/park reserves in the Gulf Islands (Map 1). The initial parcel was acquired in 1996 (southwest block), with additions in 1999 (triangular Mount Sullivan parcel), 2001 (northeast slopes of Mount Sullivan/Mount Bruce, later transferred to the Province for provincial park purposes), and 2004 (southeast block, acquired through the land transfer with the Province). The Province of BC holds a covenant over the southwest block, requiring that it be used, managed and maintained for park purposes.

The establishment of Mill Farm Regional Park Reserve was part of a larger conservation vision developed by the Salt Spring Island Conservation Partnership in the late 1990s and early 2000s. The Conservation Partnership was a consortium of all levels of government and several conservation organizations working together to establish parks and protected areas. At that time, the vision for Salt Spring Island included a regional park stretching north from Musgrave Landing to Burgoyne Bay and east-west connecting Hope Hill, Mount Bruce and Mount Sullivan and a provincial park linking Burgoyne Bay with Mount Maxwell Provincial Park, Mount Maxwell Ecological Reserve and other protected lands to the north of Burgoyne Bay.

Park Values

First Nations peoples have used Burgoyne Bay, Fulford Harbour, the Burgoyne Valley, and associated uplands for thousands of years to access fish, wildlife and plants. These areas may also have included a village site or ceremonial sites. Areas of high potential for archaeological features exist within all three parcels that make up the regional park reserve.

The southwest block of the park reserve is in the Coastal Douglas fir biogeoclimatic zone. The other two blocks are within the Coastal Western Hemlock biogeoclimatic zone. Currently, the park reserve includes a mix of young, mature and old Douglas fir and cedar forests, fir-arbutus woodlands, wetlands,



and rocky outcrops with sensitive soils and vegetation. The park reserve provides climate change resilience by providing ecological services (e.g., clean water, carbon storage and sequestration) and a range of habitat gradients (elevations) for of flora and fauna. Limited species surveys have been undertaken on the park lands but the southwest section of Salt Spring Island is known for its ecological values, including many species of significance under the *Species at Risk Act*.

The regional park is part of a larger protected area network and links to other protected areas—Burgoyne Bay Provincial Park to the north, Alvin Indridson Nature Reserve (Salt Spring Island Conservancy) to the south, and Crown land between the three parcels of Mill Farm Regional Park.

A network of former logging roads and informal trails exist in the regional park reserve. Some of them provide recreational value and are used informally by hikers, cyclists and equestrians. Because of the elevations in the park, scenic vistas over Samsun Narrows exist in some areas.

2 Park Classification & Role

The Regional Parks Strategic Plan 2012-2021 classifies Mill Farm Regional Park Reserve as a regional natural area. The natural area classification protects key greenspaces that are important to the natural character of the region.

The role of regional natural areas is to protect the natural environment and provide opportunities for a range of appropriate outdoor experiences and activities. Any sensitive or threatened ecosystems within a regional natural area are to be identified and conservation is to be the priority in those areas.

3 Issue Identification

Existing issues include:

- access and unmanaged use, including various access points, unauthorized motorized use, informal trails, opportunistic cutting/removal of downed trees
- little or dated ecological information
- a changing climate regime impacting ecosystems and forest ecology
- little knowledge of First Nations use
- limited knowledge of current level of use
- the park has been in reserve status for 23 years with no development and limited management or consideration of emergency needs

4 Interim Goals

Protecting Ecological Values

- 1) Protect ecologically sensitive areas from disturbance from development and use.
- 2) Gather baseline ecological information needed for park management planning.

Protecting Cultural Values

- 3) Protect known archaeological sites and key archaeological areas from disturbance from development and use.
- 4) Gather baseline archaeological information needed for park management planning.

Providing Visitor Opportunities

- 5) Provide interim/base opportunities for low-impact, non-motorized outdoor recreation experiences.
- 6) Gather baseline social science information needed for park management planning.

Identifying and Building Relationships

- 7) Build working relationships with key First Nations and provincial staff (BC Parks, FLNRO, and Transportation & Infrastructure).
- 8) Build relationships with key Salt Spring Island groups needed for park management planning.

5 Interim Management Direction

During the interim period:

- 1) A multi-disciplinary team approach will be used for decision-making and management of the park reserve.
- 2) Until adequate environmental and archaeological data are in place, a precautionary approach will be used to ensure that park values are protected.
- 3) Visitor facilities will be limited to those identified in the interim development concept.
- 4) Where visitor facilities are, or are proposed, proximate to known archaeological features, areas with high potential for archaeological features, or known species at risk or sensitive habitats, additional study will be undertaken to determine the appropriate location and any mitigation measures.
- 5) Hiking, cycling and equestrian use will be permitted on the designated interim park trails.
- 6) Regional park regulations/prohibitions (e.g., no fires, no camping, no alcohol, no motorized vehicles, dogs under control) and standard enforcement practices will apply.

- 7) The Musgrave Road access will be considered the primary access to the park reserve, with Mount Bruce Road and Burgoyne Bay park trail as secondary accesses.

6 Interim Management Actions

- As necessary, undertake research regarding archaeological and cultural values.
- Assess public safety hazards (fire, emergency services, park terrain) and undertake actions and establish protocols needed to address them.
- Work with provincial staff to consider options relating to the existing informal trail across provincial land that links the proposed regional park trail, as shown in the development concept.
- Prepare all mapping products.
- Prepare public information and messaging, as needed.
- Implement the interim development concept.
- Undertake research to identify significant/sensitive ecological or habitat areas within the park to ensure on-going protection (e.g., species at risk).
- Conduct a baseline visitor survey and levels of use information in advance of development of the management plan.

7 Interim Development Concept

The interim development concept outlined below is illustrated on Map 2. It includes a small amount of parking and an orientation sign at the primary access on Musgrave Road and three designated, signed interim trails—Mill Farm Trail, linking the Musgrave Road regional park access to the Burgoyne Bay Provincial Park, Lookout Trail, leading from Mill Farm Trail to the lookout location on the northwest side of the park and Forest Trail, leading from Mount Bruce Road to Alvin Indridson Nature Reserve.

More specifically, interim developments includes:

Gates/Barriers

- In addition to existing gates and rock barriers, additional gates/barriers may be added at key locations, including the park entrance from Mount Bruce Road, to preclude motorized access to the park reserve.

Trail System

- Formalize a base trail system to link the Musgrave Road primary access point to Burgoyne Bay Provincial Park, to the viewpoint on the northwest side of the regional park, and through the east block of the park reserve, connecting Mount Bruce Road to the Conservancy's Alvin

Indridson Nature Reserve, using former logging roads. Minor reroutes will be used where best addressed or where the reroute is an alternative along a former logging road. Ecological assessments should be considered when determining the best location for any reroutes.

- Assess the potential to create a loop trail opportunity between the viewpoint and the trail access to/from Burgoyne Bay Provincial Park.
- Work with the Province of BC regarding the trail that crosses Crown land and links two sections of Mill Farm Trail.
- Install limited wayfinding signs at key decision points, including an orientation map for those accessing the regional park reserve at the Musgrave Road parking area, from Mount Bruce Road and from Burgoyne Bay Provincial Park.
- Install regulatory and other cautionary or information signs as needed.
- Install trail counter(s) to monitor interim use levels.

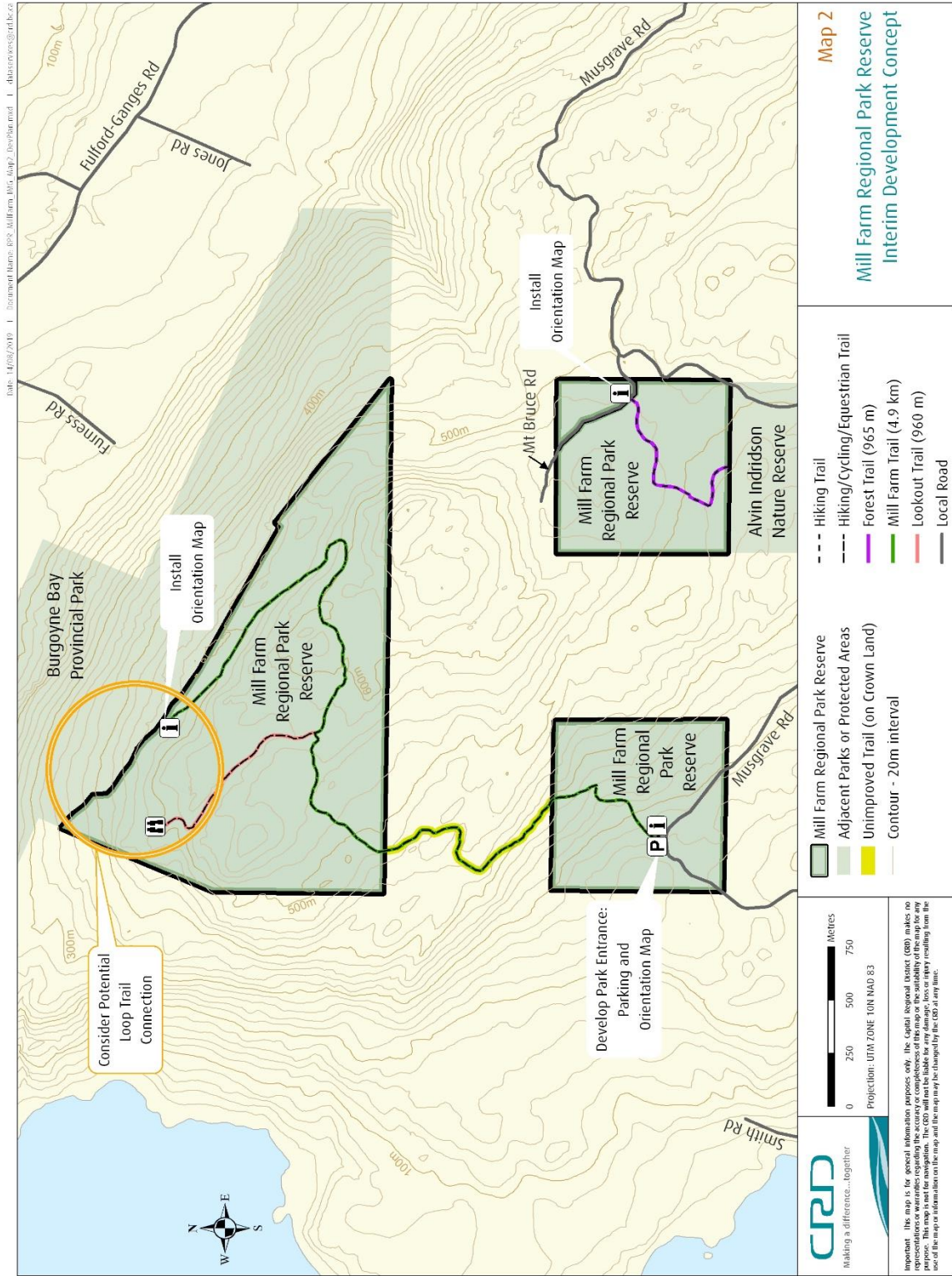
Parking

- Create a parking area for five vehicles at the Musgrave Road primary access (southwest block). The parking design should include parking for at least two vehicles with horse trailers.

Toilet

- A temporary toilet will be installed at the Musgrave Road access.





8 Implementation Strategy

Implementation of the IMGs is subject to available resources and Regional Parks' capital and work planning processes.

Action	Anticipated Timeframe	Lead*
Undertake initial archaeological research (RADD)	2019	PRMD
Assess and address public safety hazards and danger trees along interim trail routes	2019	OPS
Add additional gates/barriers as necessary	2019-2020	OPS
Work with the Province (Crown Lands) regarding the trail across Crown land that links two sections of the Mill Farm Trail	2019-2020	OPS – initial operational discussions PRMD – if application for tenure on Crown Land is desired
Undertake initial ecological research	2020	PRMD
Undertake additional archaeological assessment as needed	2020-2022	PRMD
Develop park maps, orientation map and website information	2020	PRMD – maps VSCD – website text OPS - installation
Formalize two interim trails for multiple use (Mill Farm Trail and Lookout Trail). A third trail may be improved if necessary, for hiking only, but is lower priority (Forest Trail).	2020	OPS
Develop and install interim trail signage for three trails and access points	2020	OPS
Develop parking lot	2020	OPS

Install toilet at Musgrave Rd access/parking area	2021	OPS
Install trail counter(s)	2021	OPS
Undertake ecological surveys	2022	PRMD
Undertake social science research	2022	VSCD

* PRMD-Planning, Resource Management & Development
OPS-Park Operations Services
VSCD-Visitor Services & Community Development

These IMGs should be reviewed, and updated as necessary, after five years if a management plan is not completed.



Appendix 1: Interim Roles

Implementation of these interim management guidelines falls to all sections of the Regional Parks Division. The outline below identifies what each section takes the lead on.

Planning, Resource Management & Development

- Gather needed ecological information.
- Develop mapping products for park reserve management and public awareness.
- Through the Regional Parks Land Acquisition Strategy, consider potential land acquisition opportunities.
- Liaise with provincial staff regarding Crown land interests/tenures, as needed.
- Build relationships for park management and planning.
- Track implementation of the IMGs and review and update the IMGs as required.

Park Operations Services

- Assess and address public safety needs.
- Formalize interim visitor and operational facilities.
- Provide operational services to monitor and maintain interim visitor facilities and enforce park regulations.
- Build relationships for park management and operations, including liaison with the Salt Spring Island Conservancy regarding the link to the Alvin Indridson Nature Reserve and any impacts and mitigation needed and provincial staff regarding regional park trail operations and implications for adjacent Crown lands.

Visitor Services & Community Development

- Provide key communication services and products for public awareness and orientation.
- Gather baseline social science information.
- Identify opportunities and build relationships for future volunteer or visitor programming.