



PEACE RIVER REGIONAL DISTRICT  
**REGIONAL PARKS AND TRAILS  
MASTER PLAN**



Peace River  
Regional District

**Parks & Trails  
MASTER PLAN**

**KPC**

Kootenay Planning Consultants

JUNE 2013  
updated July 2014



# Executive Summary

## PURPOSE:

The purpose of the Peace River Regional District (PRRD) Regional Parks and Trails Master Plan (Master Plan) is to develop guidelines which will assist the PRRD in making decisions regarding the current and future regional parks system, existing and future regional parks, and the support of recreational trails throughout the PRRD.

A broad objective of this Master Plan is to create and encourage better, healthier and attractive regional district recreation amenities that have pleasant, usable environments. Specific objectives include:

- Developing regional parks that are enjoyable, exciting, and accessible places;
- Maintaining and encouraging quality outdoor recreational opportunities for residents and visitors to the PRRD;
- Providing guidelines to encourage a mix of regional parks that are representative of the varied geographic locations and environments found throughout the PRRD;
- Providing broad recommendations for the improvement, maintenance, and priorities of the existing regional parks; and
- Supporting user groups and organizations in the development and management of recreational trails.

A Regional Parks and Trails Advisory Committee (Advisory Committee) was formed to assist with the development of this Master Plan. The Advisory Committee's role was to review and provide a "local perspective" on the purpose of the plan, information gathered, and plan content included within this Master Plan. The following definitions were created by the Advisory Committee.

### Regional Park Definition

In the Peace River Regional District Parks and Recreational Trails Master Plan, a **regional park** is defined as a "set-aside" property or area that is significant to all people within the entire regional district in both urban and rural areas. Furthermore, a regional park within the PRRD provides opportunities for a variety of outdoor recreation activities—including camping (where appropriate) —and plays a role, where possible, in environmental and heritage preservation.

Based upon the definition established above, the role of the regional park system, as set out by the Advisory Committee, is as follows:

- To provide outdoor recreation opportunities for local residents and visitors with a wide variety of interests;
- To develop and manage the regional parks with cost-efficiency in mind;
- To permit a variety of outdoor recreation uses, including camping where applicable; and
- To provide opportunities to protect and preserve regionally significant features.

#### Recreational Trail Definition

A **recreational trail** is a path or route solely or partly used for one or more recreation functions and is regionally significant within the PRRD but not necessarily owned, managed, or maintained by the Regional District.

A trail for recreational use can either be a stand-alone outdoor recreation feature or be located within a parkland area. Within this Master Plan, trails will be referred to as “recreational” trails where the recreational trail definition shown above is based on the definition established in the *2008 BC Trails Strategy DRAFT* and used by the Recreation Sites and Trails Branch of the British Columbia Ministry of Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Operations.

#### **CURRENT REGIONAL PARKS and RECREATIONAL TRAILS SNAPSHOT:**

##### Regional Parks

Currently, the PRRD operates five (5) regional parks which have been individually established over the last 40 years for a multitude of reasons and that accommodate a variety of uses specific to their unique site.

##### Recreational Trails

Although the PRRD does not control or maintain any trails, numerous recreational trails currently exist throughout the region, are used for a variety of recreational activities and are maintained by various groups and organizations including the Recreation Sites and Trails Branch of the British Columbia Ministry of Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Operations. Most of these trails are located on Crown land but many can also be found within Provincial Parks and some trails exist on private lands. The Regional District does not intend to own, maintain, or develop recreational trails.

#### **MASTER PLAN:**

Vision – As developed from public and stakeholder input and fine-tuned by the Advisory Committee, the vision for the PRRD’s regional park system and recreational trail support for the next 10 years is as follows:

The people of the Peace River Regional District value and wish to secure a system of regional parks and support a network of recreational trails to provide:

- A variety of outdoor recreation opportunities;
- An understanding and appreciation of the region's natural assets;
- Ecological, historical, and heritage educational opportunities;
- The protection of natural ecosystems;
- An awareness of the geography and biodiversity of the region; and
- Community linkages, good quality of life, and healthy lifestyle opportunities.

### Goals and Objectives

There are four primary goals of this Master Plan which are supported by the objectives detailed in the body of this document. These goals were developed based on the ideas, suggestions, values, and comments expressed by the general public, survey respondents, stakeholders and Advisory Committee members. They are:

#### **Goal 1. *QUALITY OF LIFE***

Provide opportunities for a good Quality of Life for the citizens and visitors of the Peace River Regional District.

#### **Goal 2. *MAKING IT WORK***

Provide a Quality Regional Park System for residents and visitors of the Peace River Regional District.

#### **Goal 3. *TELLING PEOPLE***

Establish an Effective Communication Strategy for all elements of the Regional Park System and for Trail support.

#### **Goal 4. *BEING SUPPORTIVE***

Support all aspects of recreational trail development, maintenance, and promotion, and ensure long-term viability through the recreational trail user groups grant program.

The recommendations detailed in Section 10 of this Master Plan aim to provide opportunities to fulfill these goals and objectives.

### **OVERALL REGIONAL PARK SYSTEM PRIORITIES:**

A list of management guidelines has been established below and this Master Plan recommends these be used to maintain and ensure an effective regional park system management now and in the future; they include the following:



- Park Uses
- Park Planning
- Park Operations, Management and Standards
- Climate Change and Mitigation
- Communications Project
- Park Classification
- Acquisition and Disposition of Regional District Parkland
- Barrier-free Access

These guidelines are further explained in Section 5.

General improvements for the existing regional park system include:

- 1) Create a **Park Management Plan** for each individual existing park and carry on this requirement for all future regional parks.
- 2) Establish a **Communication Project** encompassing Signage (specifically for: highway, directional, entrance, park information, floodplain information and interpretive signs); Mapping (i.e., a detailed map showing the location of the regional parks); and Media (i.e., print and online media information distribution) for the regional park system.
- 3) Develop **Regional Park Standards** to standardize amenities and site furniture (i.e., picnic tables, washrooms, and fire rings).

## **INDIVIDUAL REGIONAL PARK PRIORITIES:**

### Existing Parks – Future Improvements

During the public consultation process and through general investigation, it was determined that park users would like to see upgrades and improvements to the existing regional parks. Many comments by the public were made in regards to safety and security issues within the parks. Specific improvements identified by the public, staff, and Advisory Committee for each individual existing park are outlined in Section 6.

In order to meet the expectations of the residents of the PRRD and priorities of this Master Plan, it will be important for the Regional District to implement these recommended existing regional parks improvements.

### New Parks – Acquisition Criteria

In the future in the event that a new regional park is considered, acquisition criteria have been established to assist in determining if a suggested site is acceptable. It is anticipated that potential park sites must meet the majority of criteria, if not all of them, to be viewed positively as a regional park. Each criterion, listed below is further explained in Section 6:

- 1) Lands already owned
- 2) Geographic coverage
- 3) Environmental, educational, or heritage representation
- 4) Costs
- 5) Partnerships
- 6) Accessibility
- 7) Proximity
- 8) Already established as an unofficial park or trailhead
- 9) Site safety and regional district capacity to maintain
- 10) Avoidance of private property

Through consultation with the Advisory Committee and the public, a list of suggested potential regional park locations (see Appendix A) has been compiled for the Master Plan. The identified sites are ideas only and a full review using the acquisition criteria will be necessary if and when a site is formally proposed for consideration as a regional park.

#### **RECREATIONAL TRAIL PRIORITIES:**

Although the Regional District determined prior to this Master Plan process that it had no intention of owning, managing, or developing recreational trails, a number of recommended actions to support recreational trail development within the PRRD have been developed. These recommendations include:

- 1) Creating an annual budget for a **Recreational Trails Support Grant** and program to provide funding to registered Societies to develop, manage, or maintain recreational trails within the PRRD area;
- 2) Supporting the creation of a **Regional Map** showing the location of all registered trails and trailheads and their intended recreational use;
- 3) Establishing a **Communication Project** that will provide opportunities for all recreational trail user groups to collaborate on ways to accommodate a wide variety of users by sharing information and having open discussions; and
- 4) Establishing minimum **Trail Standards and Procedures** as a condition of successful funding, and encouraging partnerships dedicated to the long-term maintenance of trails and trailheads.

#### **COSTS AND FINANCING:**

As previously mentioned, public input established that improvements to the maintenance level of the existing regional parks is desired. In order to satisfy this request, increases to the current operating budget are recommended, as well as adding Regional District staff and staff time, both to the Community Services Department and the Public Works

Department. It is anticipated that the following additional staff will be required to successfully implement this plan:

- 1) one additional half-time public works summer staff person for the first two years after this plan is adopted; and
- 2) one full time position to be added to the Community Services Department for an initial two year term.

The “Wants and Needs” survey results indicated that 84% of the survey respondents support some level of tax increase to provide additional funds for the regional parks and recreational trail support budgets. Based on the 2014 assessment, this Master Plan recommends an approximate tax rate allocation of \$.019 to \$.029 per \$1,000 of assessed value on improvements only over the 10 year life of the plan. An example of what this would mean to the residential property owner is:

Property/building improvements assessed at:	Over the 10 year life of the plan, the estimated annual cost to the property owner will be between:
\$150,000	\$2.80 to \$4.58
\$300,000	\$5.61 to \$9.17
\$500,000	\$9.35 to \$15.28

Suggested rationale for increased taxes, as listed in Section 10, includes the following:

- Upgrading all existing regional parks to the same standard;
- Improving and expanding the regional parks and park system to encourage increased usage;
- Making capital improvements for safety in the regional parks;
- Encouraging community partnerships such as those with the recreational trail user groups;
- Generally supporting a valuable tourism resource, namely the recreational trails in the region; and
- Acquiring new regional parks.

The budget required to continue to service the existing regional parks and implement the recommendations of this Master Plan is covered in Section 9 of the document. The total operations and maintenance budget is estimated at approximately \$4,290,000 over the 10 year life of the plan. The proposed capital and operational budgets in support of this Master Plan are presented in the attached Appendix G. The Board is not limited by the recommendations or the proposed budget of this plan and its listed priorities.



Every year a new budget is established by the Community Services department that identifies up-to-date budget numbers and appropriate priorities as related to time, resources, and local wants and needs. The proposed capital and operational budgets in Appendix G are for planning purposes and are guidelines for the yearly budget process.

#### Regional Park Reserve Fund

This Master Plan recommends that the PRRD continue to develop **Bylaw 1974, 2011**, (Regional Park Capital and Major Purchases Reserve Fund) so as to provide the Regional District with a source of contingency funding to cover unexpected expenses, special one-time projects, and acquisition opportunities as they arise. It is recommended that the Regional District establish a policy to maintain \$100,000 to \$250,000 in this fund for these purposes. In the event that the reserve funds are used up, it will be necessary to look for supplementary sources of funds which could include the following:

- Commemorative Giving program
- Fundraising
- Fee-for-service

These possible funding sources would have to be studied and recommended by the Parks Committee and be approved by the PRRD Board of Directors on a case-by-case basis before being implemented (as further explained in Section 9).

#### Recreational Trails Support Funding

In order to fulfill the desire to support recreational trails within the region, finding funding and establishing a budget will be necessary. This Master Plan recommends that the Regional District commit to a Recreational Trails Support Grant budget of \$75,000 annually within the Community Services Department budget to ensure that the intended recreational trails support be met (as shown in the proposed capital and operational budgets in Appendix G). Additional recommendations of this Master Plan related to recreational trails support that require funding include a budget amount initially and a lesser amount annually to support the development of a regional recreational trails map by an outside group or organization; a group, such as the Tourism Board, for example.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS AND IMPLEMENTATION:**

The following is a summary of the Master Plan recommendations and steps for implementation which were compiled from research, public input, and consultation with the Advisory Committee. They are listed in order of priority and further expanded upon in Section 10 of this Master Plan.

- 1) Commit to the funding necessary to implement the Master Plan within the PRRD resources;
- 2) Work to improve/upgrade the existing regional parks;
- 3) Encourage the Regional District Board to develop new policies or amend existing policies to enable the implementation of the recommendations;
- 4) Develop a system of support for recreational trails in the PRRD;
- 5) Develop a communications project to promote and enhance pride in the regional park system and the recreational trails;
- 6) Work to expand the regional park system; and
- 7) Implement the Master Plan with climate change mitigation measures in mind.

**CONCLUSION:**

The PRRD has many excellent parks within its existing regional park system, some of which need improvements to keep up with increasing use of these parks. This Master Plan and the recommendations within it provide the Regional District with the opportunity to update and upgrade these important regional amenities for the use and benefit of residents, businesses, and visitors of the regional district.

# PRRD Regional Parks Trails Master Plan Proposed Budget

## Regional Parks & Trails OVERALL Capital and O&M Budget/Timeline

Base Year: 2014

General Note: Unit Costs indicated are suitable for general budget purposes only. (Class D estimate)

### Project

Period	Year	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	Total for 10 Year Budget Projection
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10			
<b>CAPITAL BUDGET</b>												
<b>CAPITAL PROJECTS - EXISTING PARKS</b>												
Blackfoot		\$55,000	\$100,000			\$25,000			\$100,000			\$280,000
Montney Centennial				\$30,000	\$120,000							\$150,000
Sundance Lake								\$15,000				\$15,000
Spencer Tuck			\$25,000							\$30,000		\$55,000
Minaker River												\$0
<i>Sub-total Capital: Existing Parks</i>		\$0	\$55,000	\$125,000	\$30,000	\$120,000	\$25,000	\$0	\$15,000	\$100,000	\$30,000	\$500,000
<b>CAPITAL PROJECTS - PROPOSED PARKS</b>												
New Park Acquisition												\$0
<i>Sub-total Capital: Proposed Parks</i>		\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
<b>SUB-TOTAL CAPITAL BUDGET</b>		\$0	\$55,000	\$125,000	\$30,000	\$120,000	\$25,000	\$0	\$15,000	\$100,000	\$30,000	\$500,000
<b>OPERATIONS &amp; MAINTENANCE BUDGET</b>												
<b>EXISTING PARKS</b>												
<b>Park Operations</b>												
Blackfoot		\$23,599	\$10,000	\$15,000	\$10,000	\$15,000	\$10,000	\$15,000	\$10,000	\$15,000	\$10,000	\$133,599
Montney Centennial		\$10,802	\$10,000	\$10,200	\$10,404	\$10,612	\$10,824	\$11,041	\$11,262	\$11,487	\$11,717	\$108,348
Sundance Lake		\$2,550	\$2,601	\$2,653	\$2,706	\$2,760	\$2,815	\$2,872	\$2,929	\$2,988	\$3,047	\$27,922
Spencer Tuck		\$5,350	\$5,457	\$5,566	\$5,677	\$5,791	\$5,907	\$6,025	\$6,145	\$6,268	\$6,394	\$58,581
Minaker River		\$11,452	\$10,000	\$10,200	\$10,404	\$10,612	\$10,824	\$11,041	\$11,262	\$11,487	\$11,717	\$108,998
Swan Lake Weir		\$28,766	\$7,900	\$8,058	\$8,219	\$8,384	\$8,551	\$8,722	\$8,897	\$9,075	\$9,256	\$105,828
Various RD Park Properties		\$5,000	\$5,000	\$5,000	\$5,000	\$5,000	\$5,000	\$5,000	\$5,000	\$5,000	\$5,000	\$50,000
Park Site Safety		\$50,000	\$50,000	\$50,000	\$50,000	\$50,000	\$50,000	\$50,000	\$50,000	\$50,000	\$50,000	\$500,000
<i>Sub total Park Operations</i>		\$137,519	\$100,958	\$106,677	\$102,411	\$108,159	\$103,922	\$109,701	\$105,495	\$111,304	\$107,131	\$1,093,276
<b>Park Maintenance</b>												
Blackfoot		\$3,788	\$8,000	\$8,000	\$3,600	\$3,700	\$3,800	\$3,800	\$3,900	\$4,000	\$4,000	\$46,588
Montney Centennial		\$11,573	\$11,573	\$11,573	\$11,804	\$11,804	\$11,804	\$12,040	\$12,040	\$12,040	\$12,281	\$118,532
Sundance Lake		\$14,500	\$14,500	\$14,500	\$16,000	\$16,000	\$16,000	\$18,000	\$18,000	\$18,000	\$18,000	\$163,500
Spencer Tuck		\$3,400	\$3,300	\$3,400	\$3,400	\$3,500	\$3,600	\$3,700	\$3,700	\$3,800	\$3,800	\$35,600
Minaker River		\$11,573	\$11,573	\$11,573	\$11,804	\$11,804	\$11,804	\$12,040	\$12,040	\$12,040	\$12,281	\$118,532
Swan Lake Weir		\$6,100	\$6,100	\$6,100	\$6,100	\$6,100	\$6,100	\$6,100	\$6,100	\$6,100	\$6,100	\$61,000
<i>Sub total park Maintenance</i>		\$50,934	\$55,046	\$55,146	\$52,709	\$52,908	\$53,108	\$55,680	\$55,780	\$55,980	\$56,462	\$543,753
<b>ADMINISTRATION - all Regional Parks</b>												
Administration & Misc.		\$81,858	\$83,495	\$85,165	\$86,868	\$88,606	\$90,378	\$92,185	\$94,029	\$95,910	\$97,828	\$896,322
1 FTE Park Planner for 2 years		0	\$75,000	\$76,500	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$151,500
1 Seasonal Park Worker		0	\$0	\$40,000	\$40,800	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$80,800
<i>Sub total Administration</i>		\$81,858	\$158,495	\$201,665	\$127,668	\$88,606	\$90,378	\$92,185	\$94,029	\$95,910	\$97,828	\$1,128,622
<b>COMMUNICATION PROJECTS - all Regional Parks</b>												
Marketing & Promotion of Regional Parks		\$5,500	\$10,000	\$10,000	\$10,000	\$10,000	\$10,000	\$10,000	\$10,000	\$10,000	\$10,000	\$95,500
Online Mapping of Regional Parks		\$3,000	\$500	\$1,000	\$500	\$500	\$500	\$500	\$500	\$500	\$500	\$8,000
Education & Interpretation in Regional Parks		\$0	\$1,500	\$1,500	\$1,500	\$1,500	\$1,500	\$1,500	\$1,500	\$1,500	\$1,500	\$13,500
Regional Parks Signage		\$0	\$0	\$15,000	\$2,500	\$1,500	\$2,500		\$2,500		\$2,500	\$26,500
<i>Sub total Communication Projects</i>		\$8,500	\$12,000	\$27,500	\$14,500	\$13,500	\$14,500	\$12,000	\$14,500	\$12,000	\$14,500	\$143,500
<b>SUB-TOTAL O&amp;M BUDGET</b>		\$278,811	\$326,499	\$390,988	\$297,288	\$263,173	\$261,908	\$269,566	\$269,804	\$275,194	\$275,920	\$2,909,151
<b>TRAILS</b>												
Recreational Trails Support Grant		\$75,000	\$75,000	\$75,000	\$75,000	\$75,000	\$75,000	\$75,000	\$75,000	\$75,000	\$75,000	\$750,000
<b>SUB-TOTAL TRAILS BUDGET</b>		\$75,000	\$75,000	\$75,000	\$75,000	\$75,000	\$75,000	\$75,000	\$75,000	\$75,000	\$75,000	\$750,000
<b>RESERVES &amp; MISCELLANEOUS</b>												
Operating Reserve		\$10,000	\$10,000	\$10,000	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$30,000
Capital Reserve		\$10,000	\$10,000	\$10,000	\$10,000	\$10,000	\$10,000	\$10,000	\$10,000	\$10,000	\$10,000	\$100,000
Carbon Reserve		\$10	\$10	\$10	\$10	\$10	\$10	\$10	\$10	\$10	\$10	\$100
Interest on Reserve		\$150	\$150	\$150	\$150	\$150	\$150	\$150	\$150	\$150	\$150	\$1,500
<b>SUB-TOTAL RESERVES &amp; MISC</b>		\$20,160	\$20,160	\$20,160	\$10,160	\$10,160	\$10,160	\$10,160	\$10,160	\$10,160	\$10,160	\$131,600
<b>GRAND TOTALS</b>		<b>\$373,971</b>	<b>\$476,659</b>	<b>\$611,148</b>	<b>\$412,448</b>	<b>\$468,333</b>	<b>\$372,068</b>	<b>\$354,726</b>	<b>\$369,964</b>	<b>\$460,354</b>	<b>\$391,080</b>	<b>\$4,290,751</b>
2000428456 2000428456 2000428456 2000428456 2000428456												
<b>Estimated Tax Rate based on 2014 assessment</b>												
		0.019	0.024	0.031	0.021	0.023						



# Regional Parks & Trails Capital Budget/Timeline

Base Year: 2012

General Note: Unit Costs indicated are suitable for general budget purposes only.  
(Class D estimate)

## Project

Project	Year	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	Total for 10 Year Budget Projection
	Period	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
<b>CAPITAL BUDGET</b>												
<b>CAPITAL PROJECTS - EXISTING PARKS</b>												
<b>Blackfoot</b>												<b>\$280,000</b>
Picnic Shelter & Design of New Campsites			\$55,000									
Construction of 10 New Campsites				\$100,000								
In park walking trail						\$25,000						
Feasibility & Design of on-site sani station									\$100,000			
<b>Montney Centennial</b>												<b>\$150,000</b>
Feasibility study, site planning & design for new campsites				\$30,000								
Addition of new campsites on upper bench					\$120,000							
<b>Sundance Lake</b>												<b>\$45,000</b>
Installation of fixed boat launch								\$15,000				
Extension of Rec Site Agreement, feasibility & design of campsites										\$30,000		
<b>Spencer Tuck</b>												<b>\$25,000</b>
Picnic shelter			\$25,000									
<b>Minaker River</b>												<b>\$0</b>
<i>Sub-total Capital: Existing Parks</i>		\$0	\$55,000	\$125,000	\$30,000	\$120,000	\$25,000	\$0	\$15,000	\$100,000	\$30,000	\$500,000
<b>CAPITAL PROJECTS - PROPOSED PARKS</b>												
New Park Acquisition												\$0
<i>Sub-total Capital: Proposed Parks</i>		\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
<b>SUB-TOTAL CAPITAL BUDGET</b>		\$0	\$55,000	\$125,000	\$30,000	\$120,000	\$25,000	\$0	\$15,000	\$100,000	\$30,000	\$500,000

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## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

Regional parks and recreational trails are important assets to any community and they are essential components of the services provided by a Regional District. Regional parks and recreational trails provide opportunities for, among other things, a good quality of life for the citizens of the region.

This Regional Parks and Trails Master Plan (Master Plan) identifies the overall priorities of the regional park system, the improvement priorities within each existing regional park, as well as specific ways in which the Peace River Regional District (PRRD) can support the recreational trails within the region.

The primary goal of this Master Plan is to develop guidelines to assist the PRRD in making decisions regarding regional parks and support for recreational trails throughout the PRRD.

This Master Plan is a living document that will provide a vision for the regional parks system along with direction for how the PRRD will support recreational trail user groups. This plan is subject to change.

## 1.1 Purpose of the Master Plan

The purpose of this Master Plan is to provide a broad framework for short- and long-term planning, management, and maintenance of the regional parks within the PRRD and the role that the Regional District chooses to play in recreational trails. The PRRD is made up of many remarkable and unique communities large and small, each with a number of distinctive social groups and varied geographic characteristics. The result is that each community and electoral area has its own set of values and needs which may differ from those elsewhere in the Regional District. Completely satisfying all of these different values and needs within the PRRD regional park system is a challenge. The broad nature of this Master Plan is intentional—it aims to be flexible and adaptable to meet the diverse needs of residents throughout the Regional District which may change over time; as previously mentioned it is a “living” document.

This Master Plan outlines regional parks and recreational trails goals and objectives. It provides a current snapshot of the parks system and the trails within the PRRD and establishes existing park improvement priorities and future park acquisition criteria. This Master Plan provides an overview of recommended policies that will guide the Regional District over the next 10 years, from 2013-2023, in maintaining and expanding the regional park system while developing a recreational trail support strategy.

In order to plan for the current and future park needs of the Regional District, it was important to incorporate the expressed needs and wants of the area residents. This Master Plan is imaginative in projecting what might be needed and wanted in the future as well as realistic in recognizing what is possible. The plan is designed to anticipate and react to change. A course of action has been developed to solve current problems and anticipate future needs of the regional park system.

Planning for recreational uses such as parks and trails is a process that relates the leisure time of people to land area: Effective park planning “combines human development and the stewardship of land by helping relate people to their environment and to each other.” (Seymour M. Gold, *Recreation Planning and Design*. New York, McGraw-Hill Inc., 1980: 5)

The overall goal of this Regional Parks and Trails Master Plan is to provide the PRRD with a tool to meet the goals and objectives by implementing the recommendations, while protecting and preserving the regionally significant characteristics of the region. A broad objective of this Regional Parks and Trails Master Plan is to facilitate a better, healthier, pleasurable, and attractive regional environment. Specific objectives include:

- Developing the regional parks to be enjoyable, exciting, and accessible places;
- Maintaining and encouraging quality outdoor recreational opportunities for residents and visitors to the PRRD;
- Providing guidelines to encourage a mix of regional parks that are representative of varied geographic locations and environments throughout the PRRD;
- Relating regional parks and recreational trails planning to all other PRRD and member municipalities' long-range planning documents and existing relevant bylaws;
- Providing broad recommendations for the improvement, maintenance, and specific priorities of the existing regional parks; and
- Supporting user groups and organizations in the development and management of recreational trails.

## 1.2 Role of a Regional Park

### 1.2.1 Benefits of a Regional Park

Parks of all types, along with natural open spaces and protected areas, provide a range of benefits to society. Some benefits include:

- Improved health and well-being of the region's population;
- Preservation of scenic areas, ecologically/environmentally sensitive areas and areas of cultural or historic significance;
- Tourism and economic gains; and
- Increased community and regional identity.

These benefits have been well-documented and quantified in a variety of studies throughout Canada, the United States, and around the world. The results of these studies provide governments with information to help determine how much parkland should be provided, what type of

#### Healthy by Nature Key Messages

**PARKS: for your health** – Parks offer a full range of physical activities in the great outdoors. Hiking, canoeing, skiing are all part of a healthier life.

**PARKS: for your family** – Parks are the very best settings in which to share memorable family experiences and strengthen relationships. Imagine the joy of storytelling around the campfire or the thrill of your child catching a fish for the first time.

**PARKS: for your soul** – Parks are the special places to rekindle your sense of wonder and solitude. Restore some balance – wake up to a bird's song or quietly watch a deer and her fawn graze in a nearby meadow.

**PARKS: for your community** – Parks are in fact small communities unto themselves where all your neighbours have a pride in nature. And, when you visit these communities, you're also contributing to the economic well-being of nearby villages, towns and cities.

**PARKS: for your environment** – Parks protect wildlife habitat and ensure ecological diversity. You'll see, feel and learn first-hand the importance of cleaner air, water and soil. By helping with the health of the environment, you can help your own health. (*Healthy By Nature: Investing in Community Parks, Openspaces & Nature Education*.p.38: Alberta Rec & Parks Assoc)



parkland should be protected, and how to protect parks. Locally, the recent *2010 Tourism Related Projects Regional Parks Strategy – Northern BC Tourism Association* fully explored the economic benefits of regional parks to the economy of the PRRD.

Parks for the general public come in all shapes and sizes and are seen as being “dedicated to public use for recreation and enjoyment” (Gold 1980: 32). Parks that are natural in character, like regional parks, are necessary in today’s world of routine, sedentary, indoor jobs as they offer people opportunities to fulfill their desire to “escape” to the outdoors. Natural parks are important to people not only because they protect the biodiversity of an area, but because they are “recognized as landscapes that deeply touch the spiritual, cultural, aesthetic and relational dimensions of human existence. (Gold 1980: 32).

The Canadian Parks Council in their *Healthy by Nature Strategy* suggests that “there is a strong link between a healthy parks system and a healthy society” (*Healthy By Nature*. Canadian Parks Council). The strategy (*Healthy By Nature*. Canadian Parks Council, p.3, paraphrased) notes that:

- *increased awareness and understanding of the contribution parks and protected areas make for a healthy environment and, in turn, healthy people; and*
- *we need to encourage people to take advantage of the opportunities parks provide for healthful outdoor activities and enlist their support for the protection of these parks and their special environments.*

Closer to home, the BC Select Standing Committee on Health has determined that the benefits of an active lifestyle, whether in a park setting or somewhere else, include living longer, staying in the workplace longer, and contributing to a generally healthier population, thereby reducing the burden on the health-care system. This is not just a local or provincial trend but a national and global trend as well. Regional parks and recreational trails, therefore, not only provide recreational opportunities for active lifestyles, but can potentially reduce some health-care costs. In the current context of preventable health concerns and achieving adequate physical exercise, having accessible and affordable opportunities for exercise, such as those offered through regional parks, are important.

Dr. Trevor Hancock, a Public Health Consultant with the BC Ministry of Healthy Living and Sport (University of Victoria, Victoria, BC), specifically endorses all types of parks by listing their health benefits as:

- Physical (exercise);
- Social (being with others);

“Studies find that residents who have access to abundant green space tend, on average, to enjoy better general health.” Jolanda Maas et al., (2006), *Journal of Epidemiology and Community Health*, 60(7): 591.

- Mental/emotional (relaxation, etc.);
- Spiritual (connecting with nature); and
- Ecological (air quality, temperature regulation, etc.).

Knowing that the natural environment has a positive impact on healthy living, the provision of parks is essential to enable people to pursue healthy living choices and activities. Local governments or Regional Districts that provide parks are therefore assisting in improving the health of their community by offering opportunities to make healthy choices such as deciding to visit a park and/or engage in some type of recreational activity. Local governments use the positive health benefits of recreation programs and facilities, including parks, as the rationale for putting money into the planning, development, and maintenance of these community assets. The Peace River Regional District has the opportunity, through the implementation of the recommendations of this Master Plan, to reposition parks to be an integral contributor to a healthy population. This can be accomplished through the simple act of ensuring an efficient and effective regional park system and by successfully communicating these assets and unique recreational opportunities to the general public.

### ***1.2.2 Regional Parks in the Parkland Spectrum***

In the broader view, regional parks such as those within the PRRD are integral pieces of a larger regional parkland spectrum. This spectrum consists of a variety of park types which generally differ in size, use, and management techniques. Regional parks bridge the gap between the small local, community, or Municipal Park (which is often developed with a number of facilities and amenities) and the larger more protection-oriented provincial parks / recreation sites and National parks. Table 1 provides a summary of each type of park and shows where regional parks fit in the parkland spectrum.

**Table 1: The Parkland Spectrum**

	National Parks	Provincial Parks	BC Recreation Sites	REGIONAL PARKS	Municipal & Community Parks
Population Served	Canada	British Columbia	British Columbia	Peace River Regional District	Municipalities & Communities
Average Size of Park in Hectares	Can be very large in size	Varies from small (10 ha) to very large (1 million ha)	Smaller, site-specific (approx. 2 - 10 ha)	Varies	Generally smaller (approx. 0.5 - 50 ha)
Goal or Purpose	To protect distinct natural regions of the country. Protection of the ecological integrity of the park is primary. Public access to explore, learn about, and enjoy Canada's natural spaces is secondary.	To protect and manage for future generations the best representation of the Province's natural features and diverse wilderness environments. To provide opportunities for a diversity of high quality and safe outdoor recreation that is compatible with protecting the natural environment.	To provide safe, quality recreation opportunities for the public on Crown land outside of parks and settled areas. The recreation experiences are generally integrated with other resource-based land uses.	To provide opportunities for a variety of outdoor recreation activities (including camping) as well as playing a role in environmental and heritage preservation for regionally significant sites.	To offer recreation and green space to residents of and visitors to the municipality. Commonly include both passive and active forms of recreation like: playgrounds, gardens, hiking, running and fitness trails or paths, sports field and courts, public restrooms, and picnic facilities.
Summary	Protection/Conservation	Protection/Conservation/Recreation	Recreation	Recreation/Protection	Recreation/Open Space

The PRRD regional park system is therefore not a stand-alone system; it does not exist in isolation but complements all the other types of parks within the spectrum.

Unlike the BC Provincial Parks system which regulates acceptable park uses through legislation and regulations (*Park Act*, RSBC 1996, c. 344), the Regional Districts use their bylaws to control desired park uses. Regional parks therefore can and do reflect the needs and wants of the region's local citizens as well as the physical attributes and characteristics of the area.

### **1.2.3 Regional Parks Defined**

Currently, of the 29 BC Regional Districts, 22 of them manage regional parks in some form. Lands for regional parks and recreational trails in BC have historically been acquired by purchase, lease, or grant from the Province, or by transfer from a municipality. The PRRD encompasses a large geographic area. Unlike in many other Regional Districts, the long distances between the population and existing/potential PRRD regional parks make

camping an important permitted use. Having camping as an approved use within several of the PRRD regional parks is unique when compared to other Regional Districts where regional parks are typically designated as day use only and overnight uses are left to the other parks systems in the spectrum, such as provincial parks and rec sites.

There is no single widely accepted definition of a “regional park” across the province or country. Each Regional Parks and Recreational Trails Master Plan document in BC contains a different definition unique to its region. The specific definition used by each Regional District seems to depend on the local situation and the specific requirements of the region’s citizens. Common elements can be found in most BC regional parks definitions such as the inclusion of management guidelines, permitted or intended uses, and levels of protection.

With the assistance of the PRRD Regional Parks and Trails Advisory Committee, the following definition for a regional park was created for use within this Master Plan document:

**In the Peace River Regional District Parks and Recreational Trails Master Plan, a regional park is defined as a "set-aside" property or area that is significant to all people within the entire regional district in both urban and rural areas. Further, a regional park within the PRRD provides opportunities for a variety of outdoor recreation activities including camping (where appropriate) and plays a role, where possible, in environmental and heritage preservation.**

Based upon the definition established above, the role of the regional park system, as set out by the PRRD Parks and Trails Advisory Committee, is as follows:

- **To provide outdoor recreation opportunities for local residents and visitors with a wide variety of interests;**
- **To develop and manage the regional parks with cost-efficiency in mind;**
- **To permit a variety of outdoor recreation uses, including camping where applicable; and**
- **To provide opportunities to protect and preserve regionally significant features.**

Regional parks in the PRRD are intended to ensure that local residents and visitors have opportunities to access, explore, and enjoy the unique attributes of the PRRD area including the natural environment, scenic features, and historic and culturally significant aspects. Public input has identified the importance of providing opportunities for a variety of outdoor recreational activities, such as: walking, hiking, boating, fishing, camping,

picnicking, biking, ATVing, snowmobiling, and cross-country skiing within the PRRD regional park system.

### 1.3 Role of a Recreational Trail

A trail for recreational use can either be a stand-alone outdoor recreation feature or be located within a parkland area. Within this Master Plan, trails will be referred to as “recreational” trails and will reflect the definition established in the *2008 BC Trails Strategy DRAFT* and used by the Recreation Sites and Trails Branch of the BC Ministry of Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Operations.

**A recreation trail is a path or route solely or partly used for one or more recreation functions and is regionally significant within the PRRD but not necessarily owned, managed or maintained by the Regional District.**

The benefits to individuals using recreational trails parallel the benefits to regional park users. By being accessible and low-cost in nature, recreational trails can provide individual health benefits to people who take the opportunity to use them. Uniquely, trails provide access to nature and the outdoors. Recreational trails in the PRRD offer recreational access to remote wilderness areas and provide meaningful and satisfying outdoor experiences for many users.

The many positive benefits to the local economy from the existing and potential recreational trails within the PRRD was fully explored and detailed in the *2010 Tourism Related Projects Regional Trails Strategy* by the Northern BC Tourism Association.

As the "outdoors" is recognized as a key defining feature of northern BC, support for recreational trails in the PRRD area by the Regional District is essential. Through this Master Plan, a list of recommendations has been presented for the Regional District to provide support to trail user groups and their volunteers so that they can effectively manage, plan, and develop recreational trails in the region.

Benefits of supporting the region's recreational trails development include:

- Keeping the development, maintenance, and improvements

Recreation trails attract tourists both locally and out of province which in turn creates jobs and puts money into local economies as many recreation trail users buy goods such as snowmobiles, mountain bicycles, equestrian equipment and hiking boots. (*Active 2010 Ontario Trails Strategy*, Ontario Ministry of Health Protection; p. 7)

- of trails in the hands of the actual users;
- Strengthening the social fabric of a community by encouraging user groups to work together on the trails;
- Increased pride in the state of the trails as users are responsible for their trails; and
- Specifically taking advantage of local users' knowledge of the special places within the region.

Recreational trails can also aid in broader efforts to protect sensitive environments by using good design and construction to keep users on the trail and off the more delicate features. Often provincial or national organizations of the various activity groups have developed excellent design and construction guidelines. The use of these existing guidelines is highly recommended.

Overall, the support for recreational trails provided by the PRRD will therefore have broader benefits than just enhancing opportunities for a few trail user groups. The entire region will benefit from protection of portions of the environmentally, culturally, and aesthetically sensitive sites in the area as well as potential reduction in health-care costs, and positive impacts on the local economy.

The addition of "trail guides and interpretive signage on and around the trails can help to identify the special features and enhance the opportunities to appreciate the natural environment, be it the diverse plant or animal habitats like wetlands and forests, or local cultural heritage." (*Active 2010 Ontario Trails Strategy*, Ontario Ministry of Health Protection; p. 7)



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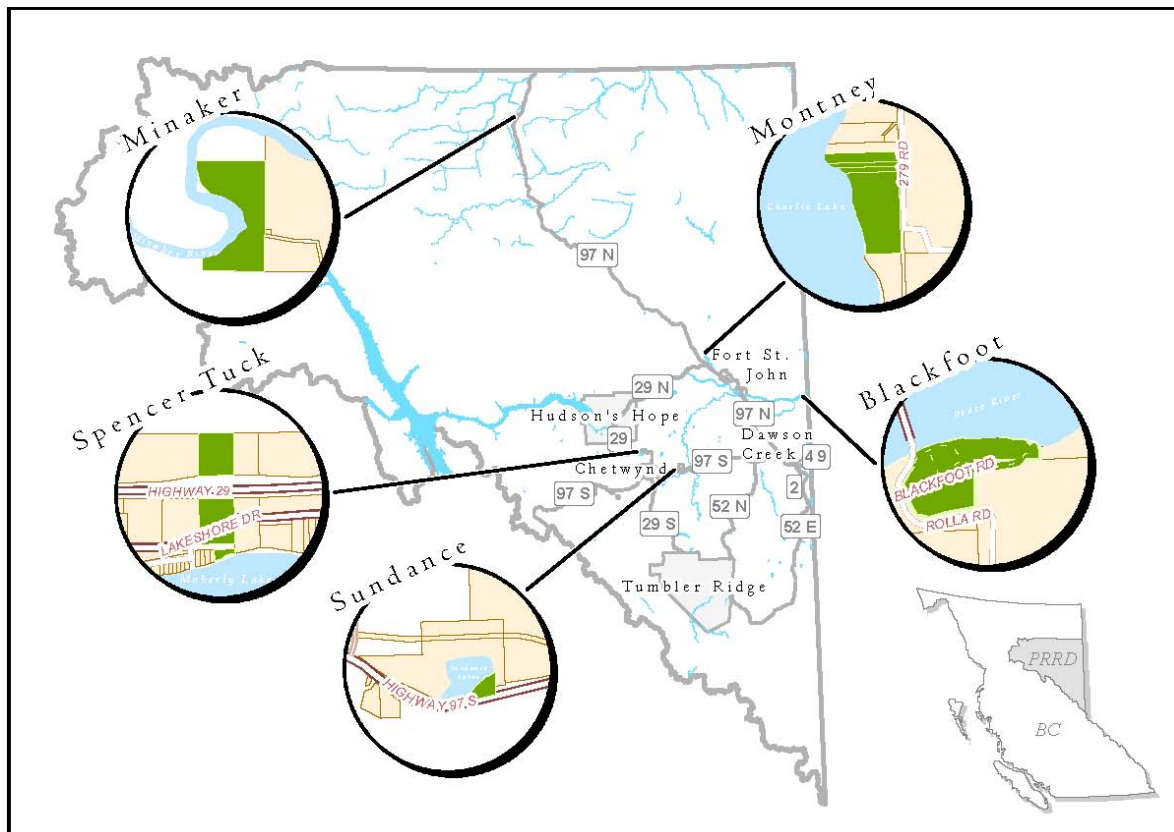


## 2.0 CONTEXT

### 2.1 PRRD – the Big Picture

The Peace River Regional District (PRRD) covers an impressive geographic area of 12 million hectares (46,000 square miles) bounded by the spectacular topography of the Rocky Mountains to the west and the plateaus of the continent's Great Plains to the east. The area is filled with rivers, lakes, wilderness areas, and forests of aspen and poplar, as well as large tracts of agricultural land. All of the natural assets of the PRRD provide an excellent backdrop for a host of recreational pursuits for residents and visitors alike. The entire region offers limitless opportunities for outdoor recreation activities such as canoeing, kayaking, sailing, fishing, swimming, hiking, ATVing, mountain biking, and horseback riding in the summer and snowmobiling, cross-country skiing, and snowshoeing in the winter.

The Peace River Regional District has within it: Highway 97 which makes up part of the Alaska Highway; Highway 29 which connects Tumbler Ridge, passes through Chetwynd and Hudson's Hope and terminates at Fort St. John; and Highway 52 which creates a circle route via Highway 2, connecting Tumbler Ridge to Dawson Creek and Pouce Coupe.



The above map shows the location of all the current regional parks within the Peace River Regional District.

## 2.2 PRRD Demographics

There are seven member municipalities, four rural Electoral Districts, and seven First Nation communities within the PRRD.

### Electoral Area 'B'

Buick	Osborn
Cecil Lake	Pink Mountain
Clayhurst	Prespatou
Clearview	Rose Prairie
Flatrock	Trutch
Goodlow	Upper Cache
Montney	Upper Halfway
North Pine	Wonowon

### Electoral Area 'C'

Baldonnel	Grandhaven
Charlie Lake	Old Fort
Clairmont	Two Rivers

### Electoral Area 'D'

Arras	Killkerrin
Bessborough	One Island
Cutbank	Tomslake
Doe River	Tower Lake
Farmincton	Rolla
Kelly Lake	

### Electoral Area 'E'

East Pine	Moberly Lake
Groundbirch	Pine Valley
Hasler Creek	Progress
Lone Prairie	Sunset Prairie
McLeod	

### Municipalities

District of Chetwynd	City of Dawson Creek
District of Hudson's Hope	District of Tumbler Ridge
City of Fort St. John	Village of Pouce Coupe
District of Taylor	

### First Nations

Blueberry River F.N.	Salteau First Nations
Doig River First Nation	West Moberly First Nation
Halfway River First Nation	Tsey Keh Dene
Kwadacha First Nation	

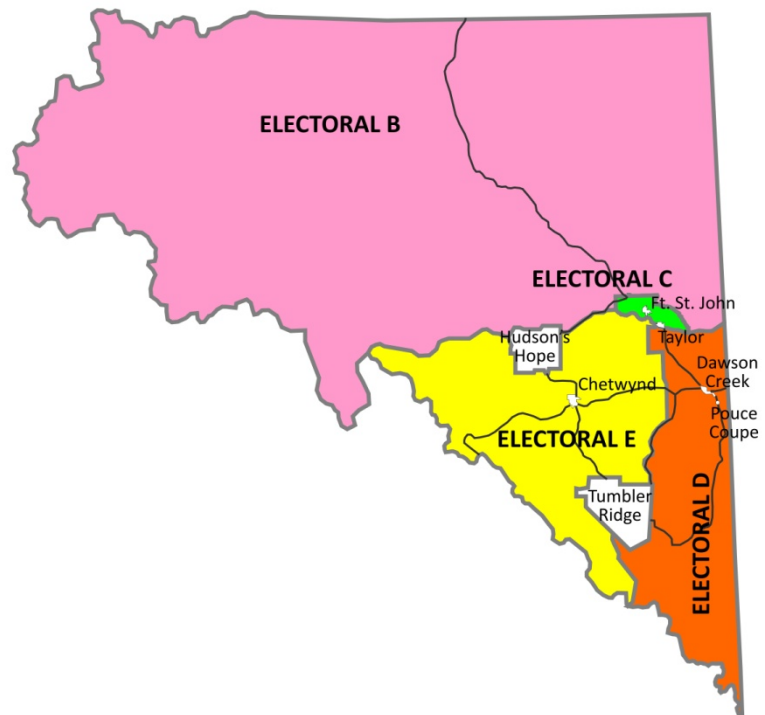


Figure 1  
Electoral Areas within  
The Peace River  
Regional District

Preliminary information from the 2011 Canada Census indicates that the PRRD has a population of 60,082, up slightly from the 2006 population of 58,264. The population growth rate from 2006 to 2011 was approximately 3%, an increase that was somewhat lower than the 2001 to 2006 growth rate at 5.8%. In comparison, the Provincial growth rate over the last five years was 7.0%. (2011 & 2006 Census, Statistics Canada, Ottawa. Prepared by: BC Stats, BC Ministry of Labour, Citizens' Services and Open Government). Although lower than the provincial average growth rate, Table 2 illustrates the solid overall rise in population in the PRRD Electoral Districts from 2001 to 2011 as well as the projected populations for the region through to 2021.

**Table 2: PRRD Demographic Statistics**

	PRRD Actual Census Numbers			Projections based on 2006 to 2011 growth rates	
	2001	2006	2011	2016	2021
PRRD	55,080	58,264	60,082	61,950	63,870
Electoral					
B	4,997	4,477	5,036	5,060	5,085
C	5,830	6,350	6,398	6,500	6,550
D	5,857	5,749	5,479	5,500	5,520
E	3,412	3,031	2,764	2,775	2,780
Total Rural	20,092	19,607	19,677	19,835	19,935
Municipalities					
Dawson Creek	10,754	10,994	11,583	12,210	12,870
Fort St. John	16,084	17,402	18,609	19,900	21,275
Chetwynd	2,591	2,633	2,635	2,640	2,645
Pouce Coupe	833	739	738	740	742
Taylor	1,143	1,384	1,373	1,375	1,380
Tumbler Ridge	1,851	2,454	2,710	2,990	3,300
Hudson's Hope	1,039	1,012	970	972	974
Total Urban	34,295	36,618	38,618	40,827	43,186

The growth projections shown in the above table indicate that there may be almost 4,000 new residents in the PRRD region between 2011 and 2021. These projected population growth rates are important to the PRRD as they demonstrate that there will likely be increased pressure on the many services provided by the Regional District, including regional parks and recreational trails.

The population density of the PRRD has remained very low over the past 10 years at 0.5 persons per square kilometre as compared to the Province as-a-whole which has a density of 4.8 persons per square kilometre as of the 2011 Census. This low density figure reflects

the presence of the large landholdings and significant amount of Crown land found in the PRRD.

The majority of the historic PRRD population increases from the 2006 to 2011 census period occurred in the urban centres, such as Fort St. John, Dawson Creek, and Tumbler Ridge. Electoral Districts 'D' and 'E' experienced population losses, while the population increased slightly in Electoral Districts 'B' and 'C'. These numbers, as well as anecdotal evidence, suggest rural depopulation is occurring throughout much of the Regional District, as it is in other northern BC regions. This reduction in rural population coincides with a slight decline in household size in the rural population as well.

The 2011 Census showed that more people in the PRRD live in one of the seven main urban centres than in the rural areas with just over a third of the population living in a rural area. Although provincial demographic data illustrates an aging population, the PRRD, like other northern areas, has a comparatively young population. The average age of PRRD residents is 34, which is well below the provincial average age of 41 years. Seven out of 10 residents are of working age and nearly 22% of the region's residents are children. Seniors make up just 8% of the region's population. Northeast is home to fewer senior citizens and more children, relative to its population, than any other region of the province (BC Stats [http://guidetobceconomy.org/bcs\\_economy/northeast.htm](http://guidetobceconomy.org/bcs_economy/northeast.htm)).

There are slightly more men than women living within the PRRD (51% men and 49% women) in contrast to the provincial statistics of 51% women and 49% men. The relatively low percentage of female workers is likely a reflection of the region's industrial structure, which is dominated by resource extraction based industries that usually attract more male than female workers. The 2011 Census further details that approximately 21% of the PRRD working population has been identified as working in the Agricultural or Resource-based industries, which include the Oil & Gas and Energy sectors. Provincially, only 5% of the working population has work in these types of industries.

The Oil & Gas and other Energy Industries significantly impact the permanent and transient population in the Regional District. Given the nature of the industries, they produce boom-and-bust patterns of development activity in the region. Specifically in both the speed and unpredictability of economic cycles and the influx / outflow of the industrial presence, which includes a large transient workforce, present considerable challenges for the local governments of Northern BC (Markey & Heisler article: "*Getting a fair share: regional development in a rapid boom-bust rural setting*". CJRS [online], Vol. 33 (3): 49-62). Although there are no statistics or methodology for tracking the transient population in Northern BC, the Regional District, Northern Health, and all of the



municipalities have felt the impact of this segment of the population on their social and community services, like parks and health services.

Generally the residents of PRRD do not move between homes over a five-year period. Approximately 80% of people in the PRRD were living at the same address in 2011 as they had in 2010, and 49% had the same address in 2011 as five years earlier. This pattern of permanency changes when you compare the PRRD urban and rural populations. Ninety percent of PRRD rural residents had the same address in 2010 as 2011 while only 73% of the urban population stayed at that same address. The five-year situation showed that the urban population is more mobile with only 39% residing at the same address as compared to the more stable rural population at 67%. These averages don't indicate whether people were moving out of the PRRD, just that they were moving (Statistics Canada. 2007. Peace River, British Columbia [Code 5955]. *2006 Community Profiles*. 2006 Census. Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 92-591-XWE. Ottawa. Released March 13, 2007).

Taken together, this statistical information helps create a reasonable picture of the anticipated average regional park user and provides support for the types of desired wants and needs within the regional park system. Age, location of home, and movement of people are all important when considering parks and recreational trails. Support for and use of regional parks and recreational trails increase with a stable population as those who reside in an area longer get to know the unique attributes and places better, as well as feel like they have more at stake in preserving those special places.

### 2.3 Recreational Trends

Recreational trends show that people are moving away from organized sports and recreation. Unstructured activities are now very popular and include hiking, biking, and cross-country skiing. These types of activities are often engaged in while visiting regional parks and recreational trails. Based on these current trends, recent studies in recreation preferences have highlighted the fact that parks and trails now play a bigger role in providing recreation for BC residents and communities than in the past. The BC Recreation & Parks Association (BCRPA) identifies the following trends that are currently influencing recreation activity choices:

- **Activity choices.** The lives of British Columbians are becoming increasingly busy. As a result, there is an increasing preference for less structured, more informal, and individualized activity that can fit easily into varied schedules and changing routines. The ability to incorporate lifestyle and wellness into daily routines is becoming increasingly important, making outdoor recreation especially attractive.

- **Increased cost of organized sports.** The cost of participation in organized sports activities has continued to rise; consequently, more affordable activities, such as those conducted at parks and trails, have increased in popularity.
- **Integrated recreation.** Facilities and recreational venues that allow for the integration of multiple recreation uses/activities are becoming more valuable. This integrated approach increases the utility, accessibility, and operational benefits of a single facility/venue.
- **Environmental awareness.** A growing concern for the environment has led to increasing support for protection of green space, including parks and trails. Public infrastructure that minimizes its carbon footprint is increasingly attractive, both to users of that infrastructure and to decision makers who are increasingly focused on public stewardship. There is also a growing interest in learning about the natural environment as demonstrated by the growing popularity of outdoor experiences.
- **Importance of health.** Physical activity plays a large role in chronic disease prevention and management. There is an increasing awareness of the health benefits of physical activity as demonstrated by the rising proportion of Canadian adults who are active. Children and youth activity, however, is considered to be a serious problem evidenced by the tripling in obesity rates over a 15 year period. Parks and trails are venues that contribute to personal health.

*(2006 Strategic Plan for the Parks and Recreation Sector in BC – BC Recreation and Parks Association)*

In summary, current recreation trends indicate the probability of increased usage of regional parks and recreational trails due to their low user cost and flexible use..

## 2.4 Other Parks Systems within the PRRD

Within its boundaries, the PRRD is well served with a variety of parkland systems such as those detailed in the Parkland Spectrum on page 12. Although there are no National Parks within the PRRD, there is an abundance of Provincial protected sites including: Provincial Parks, Protected Areas, Ecological Reserves, and Provincial Rec Sites. The PRRD encompasses a portion of one of the largest Forest Districts in the province, the Fort St. John Forest District, which itself has an area of approximately 4.6 million hectares (ha). The large geographic area results in a large amount of Crown land in both the Regional District and the Forest District area, therefore extensive opportunities for recreational activities exist.

There are 35 Provincial Parks and Protected Areas and 21 Rec Sites found throughout the PRRD. A complete list of the Provincial Parks, Protected Areas, and Rec Sites within the PRRD can be found in the attached Appendices B&C.

Many of the unique biodiversity areas of the region are protected and preserved by the existing parkland systems, including the regional parks. The large number of Provincial Parks, Protected Areas, and Rec Sites complement the distribution of regional parks in the PRRD. Opportunities exist for additional regional parks to be created from a number of BC Rec Sites within the regional district which have the potential to be handed over and designated as regional parks. These opportunities could provide protection and preservation while providing supplementary regional recreational opportunities.

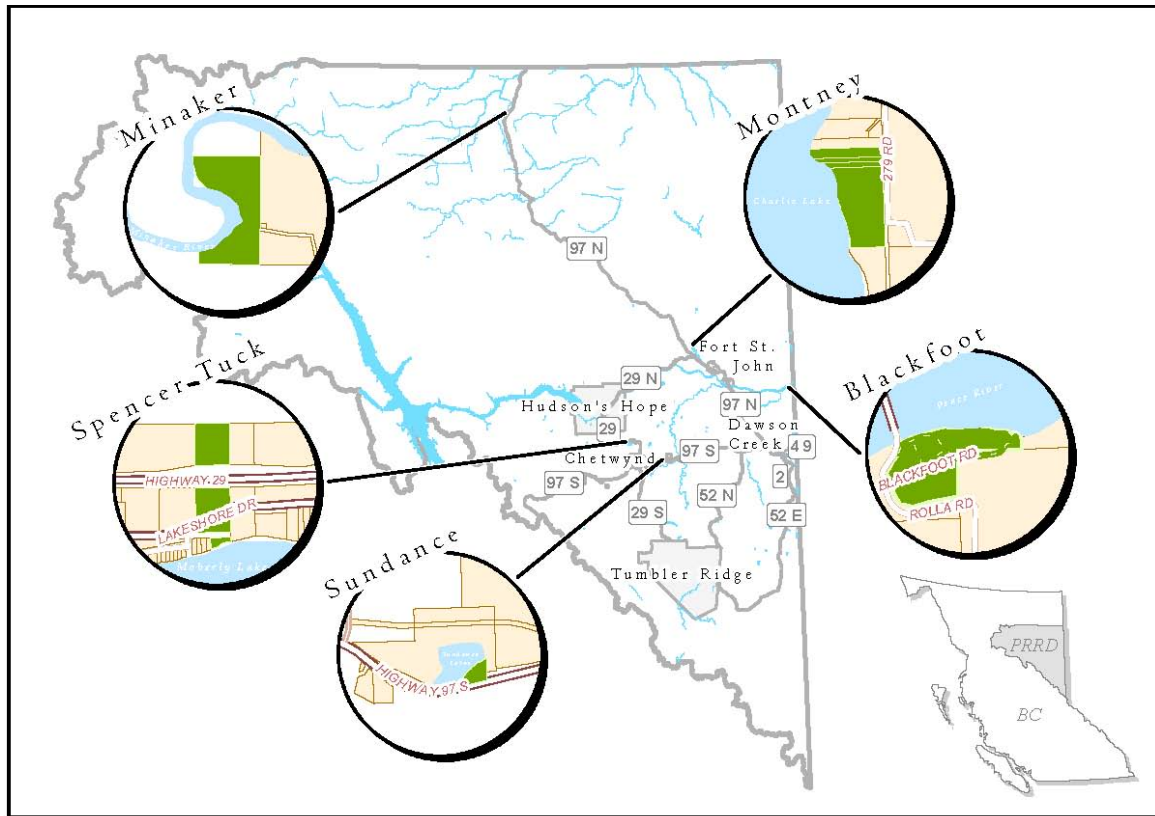


## 3.0 CURRENT SNAPSHOT OF REGIONAL PARKS & TRAILS

In order to accurately assess the regional park system, a review of the existing regional parks, including their assets, characteristics, and challenges, was undertaken.

### 3.1 Existing Regional Parks Inventory

Currently, the PRRD operates five regional parks which have been established over the last 40 years for a multitude of reasons and that accommodate a variety of uses specific to their unique sites. The figure below shows their location in relation to existing population bases and electoral areas.



The following sections include details for each existing regional park and a description of their unique features. The suggested improvements to each existing regional park can be found in Section 6: PARKS PRIORITIES 2013-2023.

### 3.1.1 Minaker River Park



**Description:** The Minaker River recreation area is located approximately 0.4 km west of Milepost 200 on the Alaska Highway with camping opportunities and Gymkhana facilities.

**Proposed Classification:** Overnight Recreation Area  
Regional Park

**Legal Description:** District Lot 583

**911 Address:** Not applicable

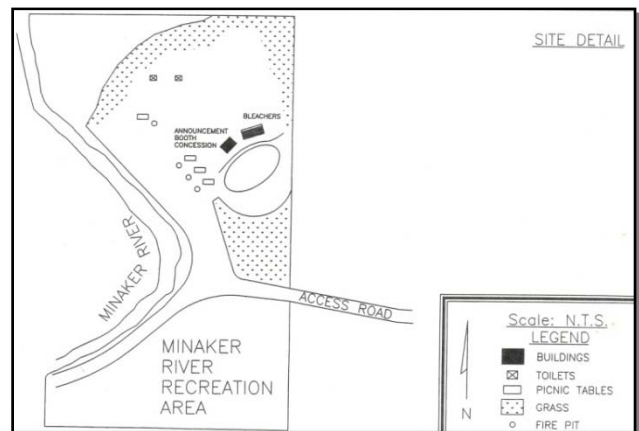
**Size:** Approximately 21 ha

**Legal Tenure:** Crown Lease of Occupation No. 805378

Expiry Date: May 2012, currently in process of renewal

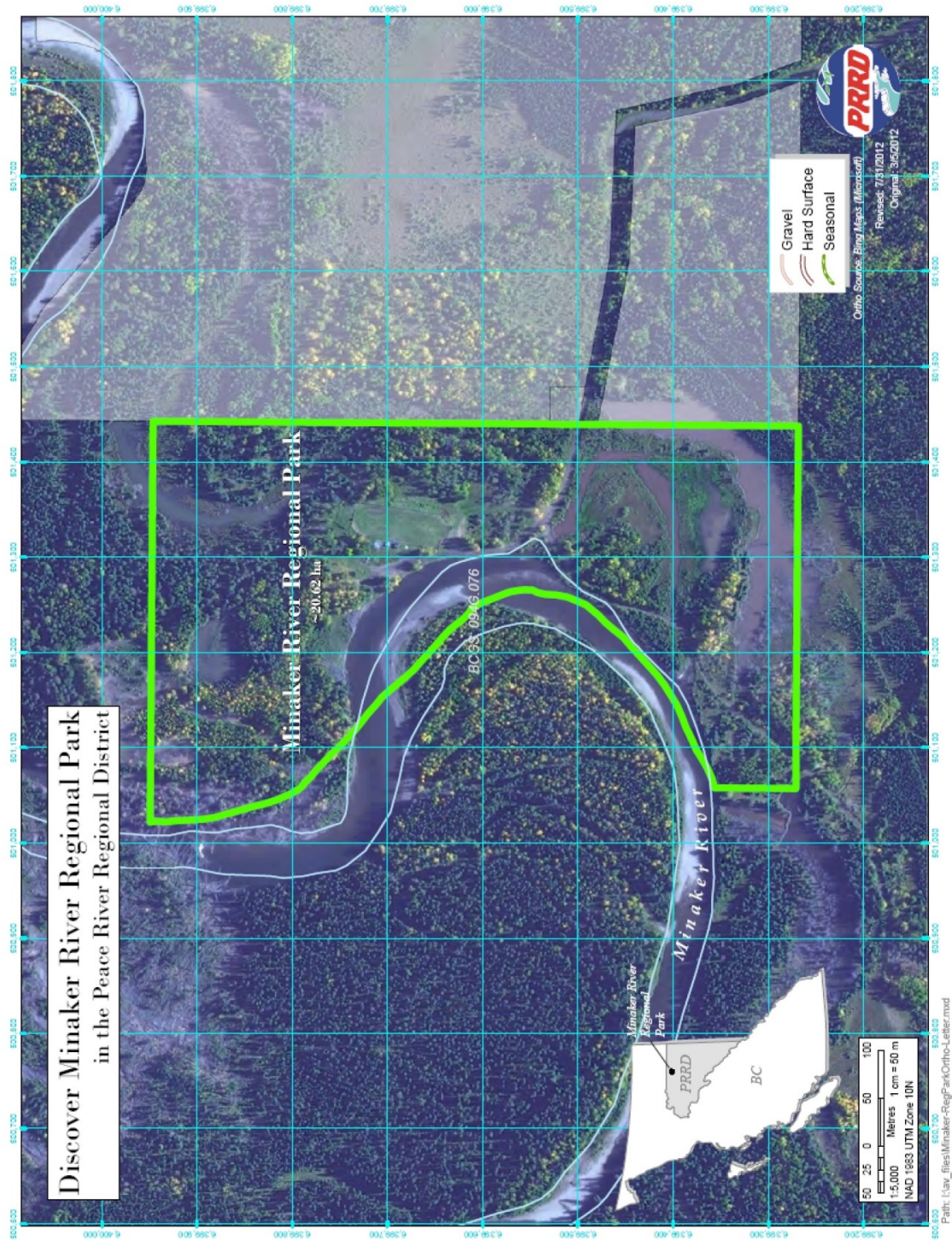
**Notes/Observations (based on site visit May 30, 2011):**

- Park is on Minaker River flats and experiences annual spring flooding
- Park is periodically inaccessible due to deeply rutted road and flooding
- Vegetation consists mainly of poplar/aspen forests
- Migratory birds have been noted
- Park amenities include: 6 fire pits, picnic tables, outhouses, horse-riding corral, and an announcer's booth
- There are currently six designated sites. Including the tent area, the park can accommodate 50 campers per night.
- Park is used by campers, fishermen, hunters, guide outfitters and other backcountry travelers, and picnickers
- Park is also used for family reunions, campouts, and weddings
- Historically an annual rodeo/gymkhana is held in late May or early June





- Site maintenance is contracted out locally. Contractors are responsible for removing garbage (site cleanup), cleaning toilets, and mowing grass between May and September.



### 3.1.2 *Spencer Tuck Regional Park*



**Description:** Spencer Tuck is located on the north side of Moberly Lake about 32 km north of Chetwynd, BC.

**Proposed Classification:** Day Use Recreation Area Regional Park

**History:** In 1990, the Moberly Lake Fire Department requested that the Regional District enter into discussions with BC Parks to obtain the property as a regional park as BC Parks was considering disposing of the park. In 1994, the Regional District obtained title to the property.

Spencer Howard Tuck (1879-1951), was born in Hampshire, England. He settled in Pouce Coupe, BC as a trapper and prospector.

Established in 1962, the land comprising Spencer Tuck Park was originally donated to the Province of BC through the generosity of Mrs. Esme Tuck, a pioneer of the Moberly Lake area, in memory of her husband Spencer.

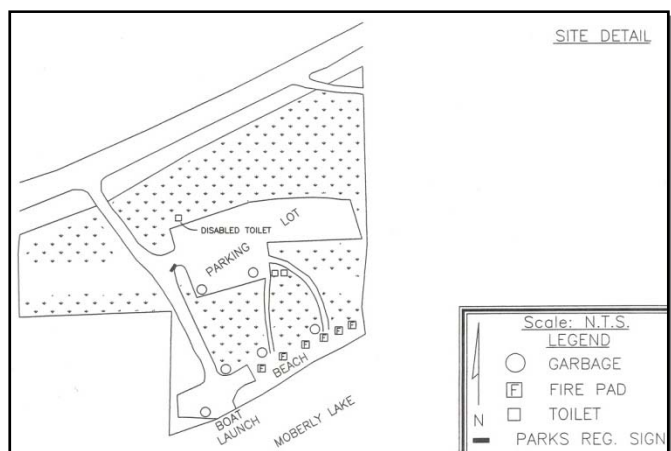
**Legal Description:** Lot 1, Plan 10918, District Lot 488, except Plan 17392 and A2461

**911 Address:** 6565 Lakeshore Drive

**Size:** 5.18 ha

**Legal Tenure:** Peace River Regional District is registered owner in fee simple. Certificate No. PH47617; Title No. PH47617. Possibility of Reverter – Her Majesty the Queen in right of the Province of BC

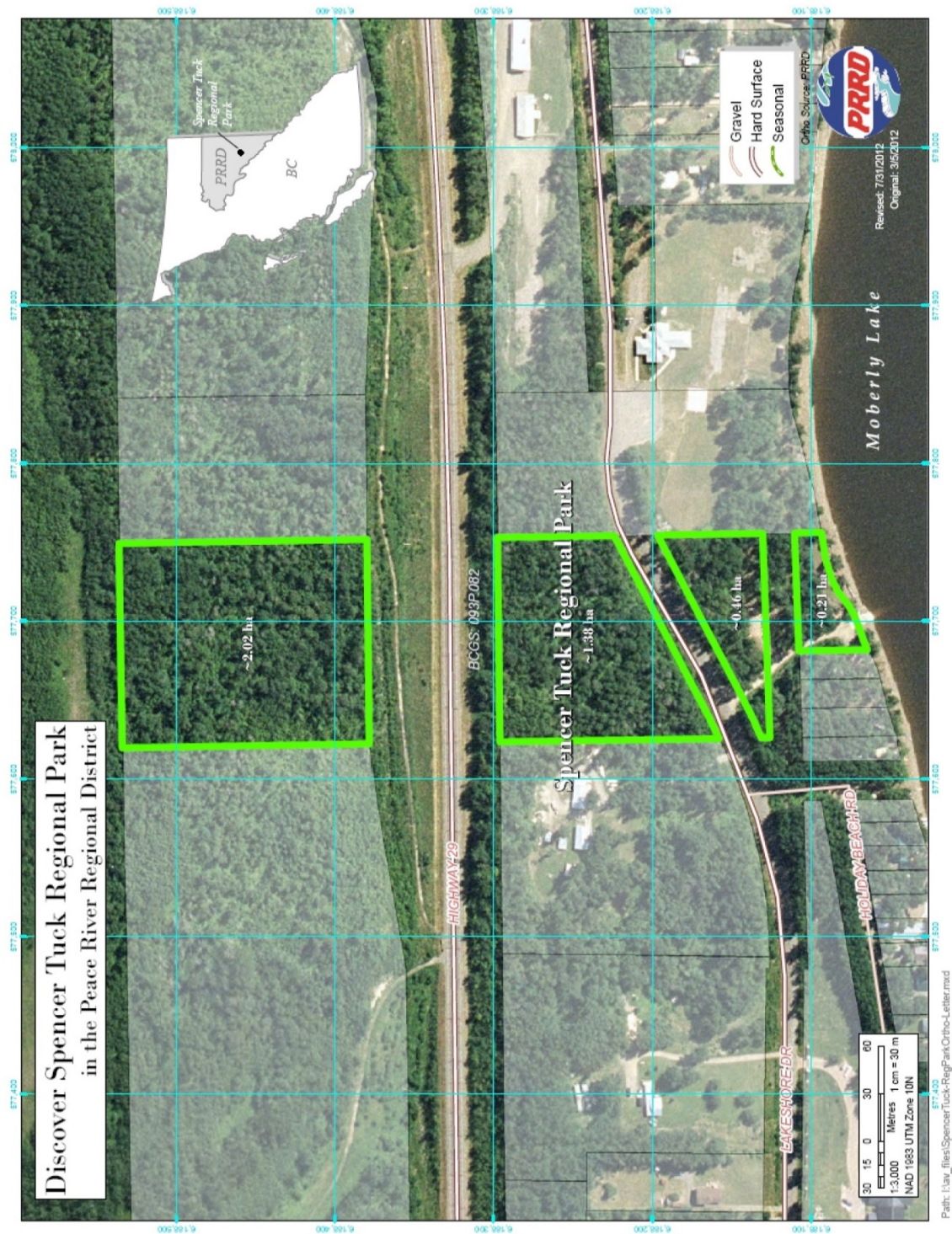
**Notes/Observations (made on site visit conducted June 16, 2011):**



- Park located off Lakeshore Drive
- Site maintenance is contracted out locally. Contractors are responsible for site cleanup, removing garbage, cleaning toilets, and mowing grass between May and September.
- Trail entrances are located on both sides of the site

- Boating-only waterfront, swimming is prohibited
- A well-used park by the local community and area residents
- Park contains the following amenities:
  - 3 outhouses
  - 5 picnic tables
  - 5 fire pits
  - 2 animal-proof garbage receptacles
  - Boat launch
  - Cairn displaying Spencer Tuck history
  - Ample parking for 8-10 vehicles
  - Log storage area (firewood)
- Site has predominately aspen trees and is left in a natural state
- Site is surrounded with chain-link fencing with a secure gate at the entrance
- There is no park sign located on the highway
- One park sign is located along Lakeshore Drive
- There are private properties on either side of the park
- Park is used by Moberly Lake Elementary School for accessing the lake in the winter for cross-country skiing and skating and spring/summer outings





### 3.1.3 Sundance Lake Regional Park



**Description:** The park is located on Sundance Lake just off Highway 97s approx. 15 km east of the District of Chetwynd and exists in partnership with the RSTBC to cover a larger area.

**Proposed Classification:** Day Use Recreation Area  
Regional Park.

**History:** Sundance Lake Regional Park was established in 2010 on a recreation site provided by Recreation Sites and Trails BC. For a number of years, the site was maintained as a rest stop by the Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure; however, in the early 2000's the outhouses and garbage facilities were removed. Due to its popularity, residents continued to use the site as a rest stop as well as a fishing, camping, and ATVing destination.

**Legal Description:** DL 1917

**911 Address:** 1346 Highway 97 S

**Size:** Entire recreation site is 22.28 ha; tenure to PRRD is approximately 1 ha

**Legal Tenure:** Recreation & Trail Sites BC Agreement five-year agreement expires in 2015

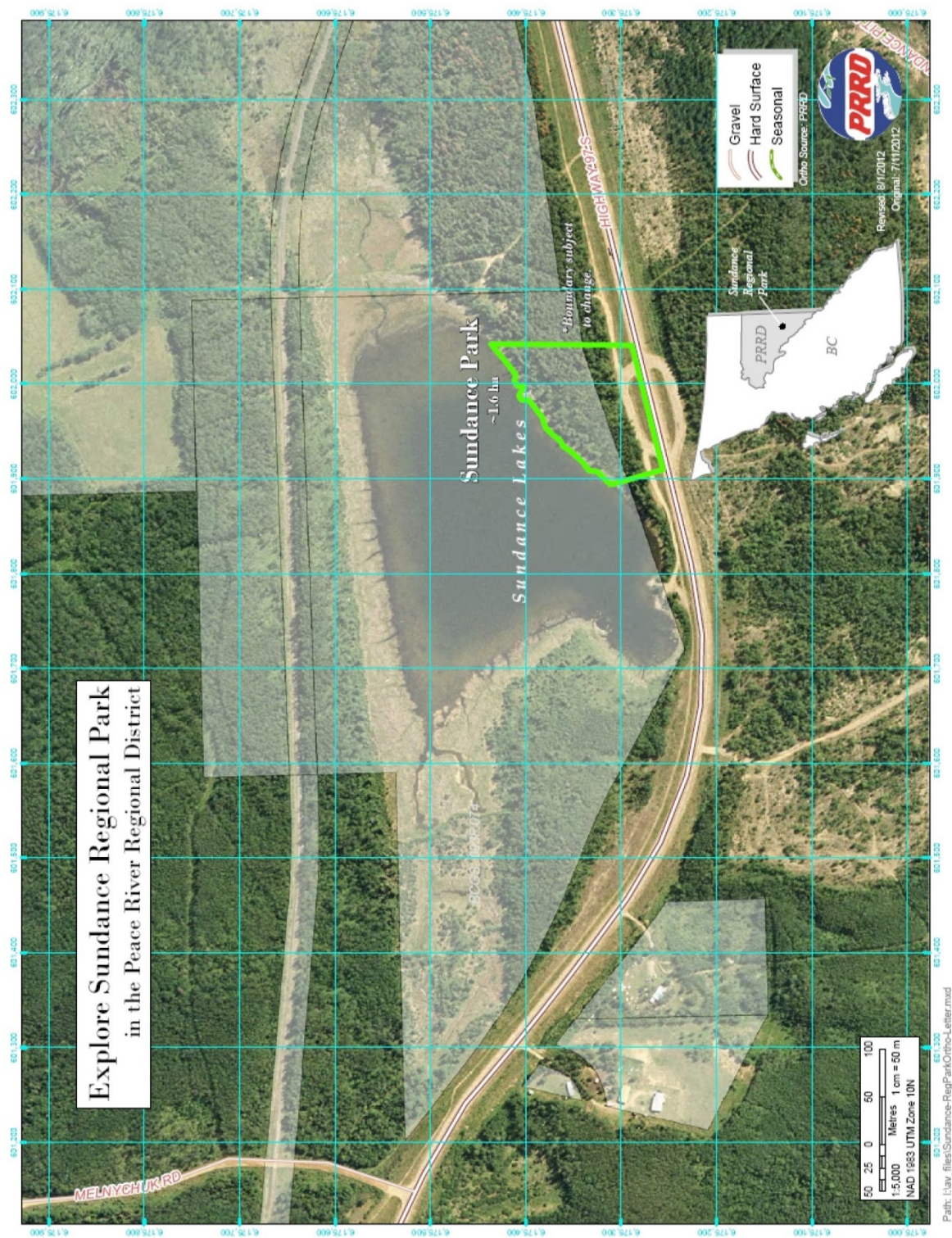
**Notes/Observations (made on site visit June 16, 2011):**

- Park amenities include 2 picnic sites with picnic tables and fire rings
- One large double wheelchair-accessible outhouse
- Boat launch adjacent to PRRD site
- No beach area
- Small path leads to lake
- Paths are well-maintained with new gravel
- Park and entire area are used in winter for ice fishing
- No advance signage present along the highway
- Existing signage has limited visibility



- Park boundary is not evident
- Lake stocked with Rainbow Trout annually by the BC Ministry of Environment
- Site maintenance is contracted out locally. Contractors are responsible for site cleanup, removing garbage, cleaning toilets, and mowing grass between May and September.





### 3.1.4 Montney Centennial Regional Park



**Description:** Montney is an overnight park in summer with some day-use during the winter.

**Proposed Classification:** Overnight Recreation Area  
Regional Park

**History:** The Montney Recreation Commission began developing the site as a Canada Centennial Project (1867-1967). At the Commission's request, the Regional District assumed tenure in March 1988. Park is located on the northeast end of Charlie Lake – once owned by the Parker family.

**Legal Description:** Blocks D, E & F and that portion of Block C of Section 23 together with those portions of the SE ¼, Section 23 and all of Township 85, Range 20

**911 Address:** 14460 279 Road

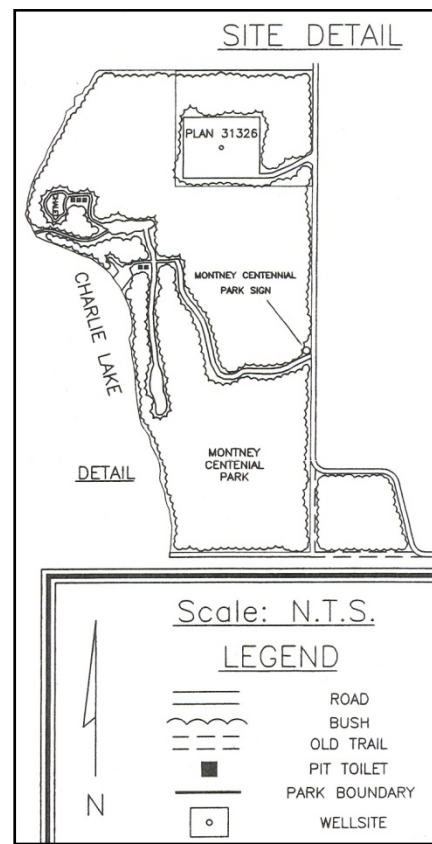
**Size:** 22.76 ha

**Legal Tenure:** Crown Lease of Occupation No. 811645

**Other Legal:** Peace River Regional District Land Use Agreement No. 1110 with the Northland Trailblazers (Chalet is located on the Park Property)

**Notes/Observations (based on site visit June 16, 2011):**

- Vegetation is mainly poplar/aspen forest
- Large bird population
- Park amenities include: 2 outhouses, 4 fire pits, no picnic tables, a boat launch (lake fishing is a summer pastime), and bush trails
- Open, unmarked camping sites (approx. 6)
- Although historically there was a day-use area, it is not identifiable today
- Northland Trailblazers have tenure to a portion of the property for club use



- Site maintenance is contracted out locally. Contractors are responsible for site cleanup, removing garbage, cleaning toilets, and mowing grass between May and September.





### 3.1.5 Blackfoot Regional Park



**Description:** The park is located approximately 75 km east of Fort St. John and 51 km north of Dawson Creek. The park is primarily an overnight camping park.

**Proposed Classification:** Overnight Recreation Area  
Regional Park

**History:** Blackfoot Park was established to commemorate the Old Clayhurst Ferry Crossing site on the Peace River. The ferry was rendered obsolete by the construction of a fixed bridge. The Don Phillips Bridge connected the rural areas of Clayhurst and Doe River.

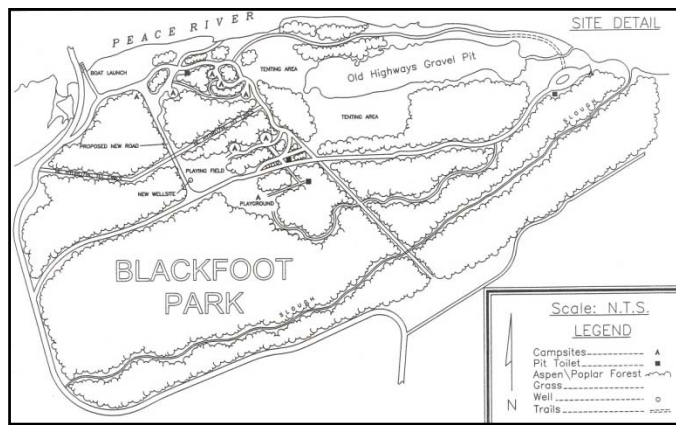
**Legal Description:** Block A, Section 24, Township 82, Range 14, W6M, PRD

**Size:** 21.68 ha

**Legal Tenure:** The Peace River Regional District is the registered owner in fee simple. Certificate no. 539315. Title No. PF8445. Possibility of reverter – Her Majesty the Queen in the Right of Province of BC

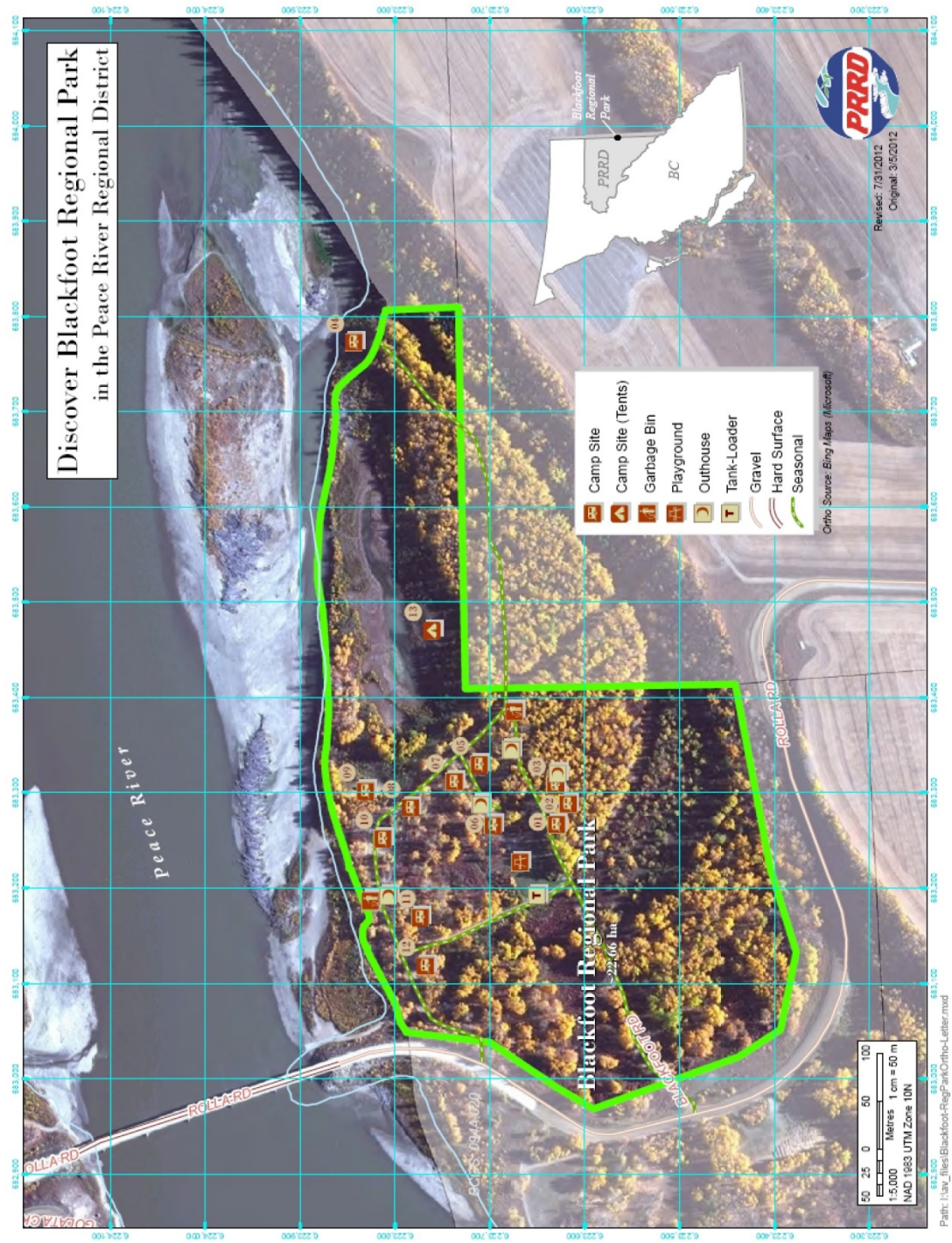
**Notes/Observations (based on site visit June 16, 2011):**

- Vegetation consists of mainly poplar/aspen forest with some birch and spruce
- Large variety of birds and wildlife present
- Undergrowth includes saskatoons, raspberries, wild strawberries, wild rose, fern, sedge, and willows
- Park amenities include: 10 campsites with fire rings and picnic tables, 6 outdoor toilets, horseshoe pits, playground, and playing field
- Boat launch is being installed by BC Hydro and includes improvements to parking area



- Community water tank loader was established in 1997 to provide non-potable water for local residents and campers
- Park has no advance signage
- Park has no identifiable day-use area or parking
- Site maintenance is contracted out locally. Contractors are responsible for removing garbage, cleaning toilets, and mowing grass between May and September.





### 3.2 Review of Existing PRRD Land Tenures

Over the years, the Peace River Regional District has obtained through license, lease, and title a number of properties. Should the Regional District choose to develop additional park properties, it is recommended that they consider their existing inventory of properties first to determine if any would make a suitable regional park (refer to map in Appendix F).

It should be noted that the designation of an area as a regional park within an Official Community Plan or within this Master Plan does not commit the Regional District to any future action with regard to that site or area. Specifically, the designation **does not** commit the Regional District in respect to:

- future acquisition of that area where the site is not held by the Regional District; or
- future development where the site is held by the Regional District.

### 3.3 Review of Trails within PRRD

Although the PRRD does not control or maintain any trails, numerous recreational trails currently exist throughout the region and are used for a variety of recreational activities. Most of these trails are located on Crown land, but many can also be found within Provincial Parks and some trails exist on private lands.

Around the community of Tumbler Ridge, there are trails used for hiking, mountain biking, snowshoeing, cross-country skiing, and dog-sledding that lead to waterfalls, caves, alpine vistas, lakes, and interesting geological formations. Several of these trails are maintained by the Wolverine Nordic and Mountain Society of Tumbler Ridge. The Monkman Provincial Park close to Tumbler Ridge also has extensive hiking and cross-country skiing trails. The Paradise Valley Snowmobile Club from Dawson Creek, Moose ATV Club of Fort St. John, and Bear Mountain Nordic Ski Association of Dawson Creek are also local groups with active agreements in place with the Recreation Sites and Trails Branch of the BC Ministry of Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Operations to permit the maintenance of many trails throughout the PRRD. These agreements officially “designate” the trails and allow the groups to develop, maintain, improve, and promote the trails.

There are also recreational trails in and around Fort St. John for hiking and other non-vehicular modes of travel along the Peace and Beatton River areas as well as the Charlie Lake area.

There are extensive trails in the Gundy area that are actively used by horse-riders and ATV users, some of which are currently being considered for designation. The trails, at present, are “unofficially” developed and maintained by a group of local residents (see Appendix B).

### **3.4 Review of Existing Bylaws**

#### ***Bylaw 860, 1994: Regulation and Use of Community and Regional Parks***

Bylaw 860 provides for the regulation and use of community and regional parks. It was developed in accordance with powers provided under the now-repealed *Park (Regional) Act*, which granted the Regional District the power to make rules and regulations governing the management, maintenance, improvement, operation, control, and use of any regional park. The parks function was granted under supplementary Letters Patent in 1985.

While Bylaw 860 provides for a wide range of administrative tools to manage and regulate park use, it now requires updates to reflect the current situation and future recommendations of this Master Plan. Some areas that this Master Plan recommends updating include:

#### **Camping Permits:**

- The bylaw states that no person may camp unless they have been issued a camping permit; however, the Regional District does not issue camping permits, nor do they currently have a means through which to issue permits at the parks or ensure that all campers have permits. It is recommended that this portion of the bylaw be removed from Bylaw 860.

#### **Special Event Permits:**

- As with camping permits, although they are listed as a requirement for a special event (e.g., group picnics, weddings, parties, concerts, fairs or concessions), special event permits are not issued by the Regional District, nor are there any fees—only a small damage deposit is required. This Master Plan recommends that this section be removed from Bylaw 860 and placed in its own Bylaw to cover special events throughout the Regional District and not just in parks.

#### **Penalties:**

- If anyone in contravention of any of the regulations is found guilty of a summary offence, they may be subject to a maximum fine of up to \$5,000. From a bylaw enforcement perspective, this may not be the most effective way to regulate park

use as it requires a lengthy and cumbersome court process in order to issue a fine, particularly for minor offences. Consideration of a ticket procedure that imposes a pre-determined fine may provide for a more effective way to enforce park rules and regulations.

### **Rules and Regulations:**

- Although many of the park rules and regulations are relevant and standard to most of the existing regional parks, there are some park rules and regulations are recommended for review and considered when looking at the actual park uses. For example, #19 notes that “No person shall hunt or discharge or carry any loaded firearm, bow or crossbow” and #25 notes that operation of an unlicensed ATV is also not allowed. As noted in Section 3.1.1, Minaker River Park is often a staging point for local guide outfitters who may have loaded firearms and crossbows in their possession while in the park as well unlicensed ATVs. This Master Plan recommends that the Regional District update this bylaw with specific park use in mind to allow for unique park uses occurring at each regional park.

It should also be noted that there are a number of properties currently listed under Bylaw 860 that have been recorded as a regional or community park for administrative purposes to which the bylaw no longer applies. It is recommended that the bylaw be further updated to reflect only the regional parks that currently exist and those properties that are PRRD Land Tenures area, and to remove those that are now operating as community parks.

### **Regional Parks that have been disposed of or transferred that still appear in Bylaw 860 include the following:**

- Beaton River Park: reverted to Crown in 2009 due to maintenance issues
- Copeland Beach: reverted to Crown in 2009 due to access and maintenance issues
- Pouce Coupe Regional Park: transferred to the Village of Pouce Coupe
- Wonowon Community Hall/Rodeo Grounds and Playground: transferred to Wonowon Horse Club

There are a number of community parks listed within Bylaw 860 which do not fall under the scope of this Master Plan. It is recommended that a separate bylaw or schedule be developed for these community parks. A list of the community parks currently under Bylaw 860 is found in Appendix C.

### ***Bylaw 591, 1988 Blackfoot Park Commission***



The Blackfoot Park Commission was established in 1988 whereby the Regional District delegated management responsibilities for the park directly to the six-person Commission. While it appears that the Commission was active in managing the park in the early years, enthusiasm for the Commission began to wane in 1995 and subsequently the Commission has not been active since approximately 1996 when volunteers could not be found to act as commissioners.

Although the Regional District has discussed reactivating the Commission, this Master Plan recommends the elimination of the Blackfoot Park Commission and the repeal of Bylaw 591 . The elimination of this single regional park Commission will ensure overall consistency in managing, operating, and regulating regional park uses and standards within the regional park system. This recommendation to eliminate the Blackfoot Park Commission is further supported by the existence of the Regional District's Board-appointed Parks Committee which currently provides policy oversight and direction for **all** regional parks and it is recommended that this overall regional park responsibility remain in place. Retaining a Commission like the Blackfoot Park Commission fragments the management of the regional park system. It is more effective and efficient to have one singular body manage all regional parks within the PRRD regional park system.

***Bylaw 1974, 2011 Regional Park Capital and Major Purchases Reserve Fund***

In 2011, a capital and major purchases reserve fund was established for replacement of existing machinery and equipment, for purchase of additional machinery and equipment, and to undertake other major and capital projects. While it will take time to accumulate funds, the reserve will place the Regional District in a good position to make important upgrades and replace capital items at the end of their useful life. This is discussed in more detail in Section 10: Funding.





## 4.0 THE MASTER PLAN PROCESS

This section describes the process used to develop and implement the Master Plan and the subsequent recommendations.

### 4.1 Approach

This Master Plan was developed through a four-phase planning process which included the following:

1. **Research and Investigation**

This phase included a review of the current PRRD parks system through site visits, discussions with PRRD staff and several stakeholder groups, a review and comparison of other Regional Districts' Parks and/or Trails Master Plans, and an analysis of national, provincial, and local outdoor recreation and park use trends.

2. **Community Input Process**

This phase included:

- compilation of the results from the "Wants and Needs" survey that was available for completion online and in hard-copy format;



- eleven Open House events throughout the PRRD where casual one-on-one discussions engaged many interested locals;
- Regional District staff attendance at Fall Fairs during the 2011 season to informally discuss the regional parks and recreational trails with members of the public;
- Regional District staff from a variety of departments providing comments and suggestions through informal discussions on their challenges and aspirations related to operation and maintenance of the existing regional parks;
- telephone interviews with stakeholder groups and government agencies; and
- meetings and consultation with the Regional Parks and Trails Master Plan Advisory Committee (Advisory Committee).

All of the community input provided a relatively clear picture of what a significant number of PRRD residents want in their regional parks and recreational trails.

### 3. **Master Plan Draft**

The Draft Master Plan was developed with participation of a newly created Regional Parks and Trails Advisory Committee. This led into a review of the Draft Plan by the Advisory Committee and the stakeholder groups as well as second round of public engagement sessions to garner additional comments from the general public.

### 4. **Final Master Plan**

This phase included the finalization of the Plan which was adopted by the Peace River Regional District **Board on \_\_\_\_\_**, 2014.

## 4.2 **Consultation**

From the beginning of this Regional Parks and Trails Master Plan process, it was determined that community involvement was essential for the Master Plan to appropriately reflect the needs and wants of the PRRD. Inclusion and engagement of the residents of the Regional District from the beginning through to the end of the process has ensured a successful Plan that benefits the entire region and its citizens. The community was consulted and engaged in several ways to gather their input for this Master Plan. Integration, collaboration, and early public engagement were achieved through many creative and innovative methods to collect this valuable information.

### 4.2.1 Open House Events

The general public, as well as the actual users and potential users, were identified as some of the best sources of information for the ongoing planning and management of the regional park system. The initial Open House events started off with a presentation of the Purpose of the Regional Parks and Trails Master Plan and the plan's development at the Regional District Volunteer Appreciation dinner. After this,



eleven Open House events were hosted at community centres throughout the Regional District area during the month of October 2011, providing direct contact with a wide range of PRRD residents. Open Houses were held in Chetwynd, Dawson Creek, Doe River, Tumbler Ridge, McLeod, Fort St. John, Clearview, Buick, Wonowon, Tomslake, and Hudson's Hope.

Individuals were engaged in interactive discussions and idea-sharing on: the long-term vision of regional parks; how the PRRD could support trail development and maintenance; and potential future park locations.

Some of the key findings from the Open House events include:

- **Awareness** – There is a general lack of knowledge and awareness of the regional park system in the PRRD. Among those who had heard or knew of the regional parks, Blackfoot Regional Park was the most well-known park. Two especially common complaints were that there is a general lack of information available about the regional parks and a lack of adequate, visible signage directing them to the parks (i.e., starting at the major highways all the way into the parks themselves).
- **Accessibility** – Many people felt that the existing parks should be improved and made more accessible to all residents of the PRRD. The term “accessible” appeared to mean: safe, secure, welcoming to all, and a pleasant place to visit.
- **Trails** – Even though the PRRD does not own, maintain, or manage any recreational trails within its geographic area and does not intend to, most of the conversations at the Open Houses centered on trails, including trails-related development, uses, concerns, and needs. It was learned that there are many kilometres of recreational trails existing throughout the PRRD. Some of these recreational trails are appropriately designated by the BC Rec Sites & Trails Branch, well-maintained, and very popular. Several of the organized trail user

groups—from horseback riders, to hikers, ATVers, snowmobilers, mountain bikers, and cross-country skiers—were consulted and several members of the general public expressed their ideas for recreational trails within the Regional District area.

The Open House events were very successful as they have established the local point of view of the specific wants and needs of the PRRD residents.

A complete summary of the Open House events is provided in Appendix E.

In addition to the Open House events, Regional District staff brought information about the Master Plan to several Fall Fairs in the area, including the Kiskatinaw Fall Fair, North Peace Fall Fair, Hudson's Hope Fall Fair, and the Sweetwater Music and Arts Festival.

#### ***4.2.2 Needs and Wants Survey***

The Needs and Wants survey was an important component of the public engagement stage in the development of the Master Plan as it provided an effective way to obtain a wide spectrum of public input. The survey was conducted simultaneously with the Open House events both online and in hard-copy format, and was available from August 9<sup>th</sup> to November 15<sup>th</sup>, 2011. The survey was designed to invite feedback in the following areas:

- User opinions on their needs and wants for the management, improvement, and future expansion of the regional park system;
- Public suggestions for new regional parks; and
- Ideas regarding opportunities for Regional District support for recreational trails within the PRRD area.

In total, 270 surveys were completed of which 77% (or 208) were filled out in hard-copy.

The link to the online survey was emailed to stakeholder group contacts for distribution to their members, and the survey was promoted during several local Fall Fairs. A total of 11 Open Houses were held throughout the PRRD from October 17-28, 2011; PRRD residents who attended the Open House events were encouraged to complete a survey either in hard-copy or online. These events offered another chance to connect with the user groups whereby individual members took the survey information back to their groups for more people to complete. A noticeable increase in the number of surveys completed and submitted occurred during and immediately after the Open House events. The PRRD provided advertisement in several local newspapers and on the local radio stations to promote the survey and Open House events. A copy of the survey is attached in Appendix E.

The survey results provide the statistical backup for the information gathered at the Open Houses and will support the recommendations in this Master Plan.

Some of the key findings from the Needs and Wants Survey include:

## **REGIONAL PARKS**

### **General Parks Comments**

- The majority of all respondents had never visited any of the regional parks.
- The most visited regional park was Blackfoot followed by Montney.
- Minaker Park was the least-known and least-visited regional park.
- "Provide opportunities for outdoor recreation for local residents" was chosen by 81% of the respondents as being a "Very important" role for regional parks.
- "Attract tourists" was chosen 25% of the time as being a "Not important" role for regional parks.
- The respondents felt that all of the types of parks are important.
- There were many suggestions for new park sites. The most popular is Beaton River area followed by the Peace River area.

### **Barriers to Access or Use in Regional Parks**

- "Lack of information/directions" was identified 56% of the time as a factor that limits people and their households from using regional parks.

### **In-Park Activities**

- "Walking" was identified 70% of the time as an activity that people enjoy while visiting a regional park followed by "Camping" and "Picnicking."
- "Camping" was chosen 65% of the time as a "Very important" type of regional park use.
- "Motorized recreational parks" was chosen 42% of the time as a "Not important" type of regional park.

### **Existing Parks**

#### *Blackfoot Regional Park*

- Respondents who stated they use the park indicate they are satisfied with the facilities at Blackfoot. Playgrounds, signage, and safety monitoring were most

commonly selected as unsatisfactory, while picnic table, roads, and cleanliness are most commonly checked by users/respondents as satisfactory.

#### *Montney Centennial Park*

- Respondents/users indicated they were unsatisfied–neutral in rating the facilities at Montney. Bathrooms, signage, and picnic table were identified as amenities with which users are “unsatisfied”. Users indicated they are “satisfied” with the fire pits, roads, and boat launch amenities.

#### *Minaker River Park*

- Respondents/users indicated they were neutral in satisfaction levels for the Minaker park facilities. Trails, roads, picnic tables, and fire pits topped the list as unsatisfactory amenities, while none of the amenities were selected often enough to list as satisfactory. This could be due to the number of respondents who used this park being significantly lower than for the other parks.

#### *Spencer Tuck Park*

- The facilities within Spencer Tuck Park were ranked as satisfactory by the respondents/users. None of the amenities was selected often enough to list as unsatisfactory, while signage, roads, beach access, picnic tables, and bathrooms were all considered satisfactory by the respondents/users.

#### *Sundance Lake Park*

- The facilities within Sundance Lake Park were ranked as satisfactory by the respondents/users. None of the amenities was selected often enough to list as unsatisfactory, while bathrooms, cleanliness, environmental protection, roads, and signage were all selected as satisfactory by respondents/users.

### **General Park Amenities Comments**

- “Bathroom facilities” was chosen 68% of the time as needing to be “added or improved” upon in the existing regional parks.
- “Cooking/BBQ/rain shelter” was chosen 55% of the time as needing to be “added or improved” upon in the existing regional parks.
- “Trail Markers” was chosen 55% of the time as needing to be “added or improved” upon in the existing regional parks.
- “Garbage cans” was chosen 54% of the time as needing to be “added or improved” upon in the existing regional parks.

### **Investment in Regional Parks**

- The majority of respondents (92%) said they would like to see investment in regional parks.
- 84% of respondents said that they would not mind a tax increase to support park improvements and additional maintenance.
- 28% of respondents said that they would support a tax increase of \$1 - \$10/year.
- "Increased maintenance" was chosen 73% of the time as the type of investment that people would support.
- "Installation of additional amenities" was chosen 56% of the time as the type of investment that people would support.
- "Acquisition of new land" was chosen 49% of the time as the type of investment that people would support.

## **RECREATIONAL TRAILS**

### **General Trail Comments**

- The majority of respondents are satisfied with the existing trails. None of the categories show "Very satisfied" as the leading response.
- "Provide opportunities for outdoor recreation for local residents" was chosen 83% of the time as a "Very important" role of the regional trails.
- "Attract tourists" was chosen 35% of the time as a "Not important" role of the regional trails.
- "Conflict with other users" was chosen less than 9% of the time for what limits people from using the existing trails.
- 69% of respondents did not think that additional trails should be developed. Many of the 33% who felt trails should be provided noted an extensive list of trail location suggestions.

### **Barriers to Access to Recreational Trails**

- 43% of respondents indicated they were "Not satisfied" with signage for existing trails.
- "Lack of information" was chosen 50% of the time as the reason people do not use existing trails.



### Activities on Trails

- Respondents were asked to select one or more of their favourite recreational trail uses. "Hiking" was chosen by 74% of respondents as the most popular use of the existing trails. ATV use was chosen by 30% of respondents; 26% selected cross-country skiing; snowmobiling and cycling were selected by 22%; and horseback-riding was selected by 21% of respondents.
- "Hiking trails" were identified 73% of the time as a "Very important" type of regional trail to be found in the region.
- "Motorized vehicle trails" were identified 42% of the time as being a "Not important" type of regional trail to be provided in the region.

### Investment for Recreational Trails

- 88% of respondents chose "yes" when asked if they supported investment in regional trails.
- "Improvement to trail system" was identified by 75% of people for investment of Grant Funding.
- "Maintenance of existing trails" was identified by 65% of people for investment of Grant Funding.
- The acquisition of new lands was deemed "less important" by the respondents as compared to the improvement and maintenance of existing trails.
- 82% of respondents said that they would not mind a tax increase to benefit recreational trails in the area.
- 33% of respondents said that they would support a tax increase of \$1 - \$10/year.

A complete summary and copy of the survey is provided in Appendix E.

#### **4.2.3 Stakeholder Input**

Stakeholder input and interviews were conducted face-to-face, via email, over the phone, and through the review and comment on the Draft Master Plan document. Each specific group was given the opportunity to express their needs, wants, and concerns in regard to both the regional parks and the recreational trails of the Regional District. The stakeholders include:

#### **Municipalities**

- City of Fort St. John
- Village of Pouce Coupe

- City of Dawson Creek
- District of Chetwynd
- District of Tumbler Ridge
- District of Taylor
- District of Hudson's Hope

### **Provincial Government**

- Agricultural Land Commission
- BC Ministry of Transportation & Infrastructure South Peace Office
- BC Ministry of Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Operations: Recreation Sites and Trails BC

### **First Nations**

- Treaty 8 Tribal Association
- West Moberly First Nations
- Saulteau First Nations
- Halfway River First Nations
- Prophet River First Nations
- Fort Nelson First Nations
- Doig River First Nations
- Blueberry River First Nations

### **School Districts**

- School District No. 59 (Peace River South)
- School District No. 60 (Peace River North)

### **Environmental Organizations**

- Nature Trust of BC

### **Business Groups of the PRRD**

- Dawson Creek & District Chamber of Commerce
- Tumbler Ridge Chamber of Commerce
- Fort St. John Chamber of Commerce
- Chetwynd & District Chamber of Commerce and Visitor Information Centre
- Northern BC Tourism

### **RCMP**

- Chetwynd RCMP
- Fort St. John RCMP

A complete summary and copy of the stakeholder interviews are provided in Appendix E.

#### ***4.2.4 Public Presentation of DRAFT Plan***

In April 2013, the Draft Master Plan was presented to the citizens and stakeholders of the Peace River Regional District in the following ways.

#### a) Local Trade Shows

The Draft Master Plan was made available for review and comment at 3 separate local trade shows. Either the Regional District staff or the Master Plan consultants were present at each trade show. It is estimated that approximately 100 to 500 people were reached at each event. People were engaged through information boards, promotional items (magnets, master plan summary flyer) and through complimentary door prizes.

Some of the comments received at the trade shows included:

- *Several people asked about a map being made available showing all of the regional parks and with good directions on how to get there.*
- *There was a mostly positive response regarding recommendations including the possible tax increase.*
- *There were questions about camping being made at Sundance as well as suggestions of better access to the lake on the west side of the park.*
- *Many people would like to add the provision of firewood to the items supplied by the PRRD and more frequent park clean-up/garbage collection.*
- *There was a suggestion that some people would like to see trails from the subdivision outside of FSJ connected to the trails within FSJ.*
- *It was suggested that if the Site C dam is approved and constructed the PRRD should work with BC Hydro to develop a swimming beach on the new dam site as a Regional Park.*
- *Several people added that they have used and will continue to use Montney Centennial Park for kayaking.*
- *Comment that there is a need for a trail from the school to the senior's home in Prespatou.*
- *There was a comment about needing an attendant in Blackfoot due to ATV use and there needs to be a wheelchair accessible washroom.*
- *Sundance Lake – try to incorporate boat launch as the one there is currently a dumping ground.*
- *Industry needs to replace trails that they destroy.*
- *There is a lake on the other side of the highway from Sundance that would be easy to develop*

#### b) Website and Online Survey

The entire Draft Master Plan was made available online at the PRRD website. A short survey allowed for comments.

Some of the comments received include:

#### ***Regarding Spencer Tuck Day Use Recreation area on Moberly Lake:***

- *needs signage on Highway 28*

- *during certain months the boat ramp at Moberly lake Provincial Park is not useable for medium size boats and large boats due to shallow area around their boat ramp - that is when boaters prefer to use the Spencer Tuck Park for launching boats and taking out boats.*
- *A picnic shelter with some protection from rain and wind would contribute to the comfort of people using this Park*

c) Local Promotion

During the week of April 12-22, 2013, the Draft Master Plan consultants talked to various stakeholders and distributed the Draft Master Plan Summary flyer to several municipalities and other public gathering areas. The flyers were given to be displayed for the general public. The Peace Country River Rats and the Moose ATV Club were informed as they also attended the trade shows.

d) Stakeholder Email List

The link to the online Draft Master Plan was emailed out the stakeholder list that was developed during the initial public engagement process.

Some of the comments received include:

***Regarding Montney Centennial & Blackfoot Parks – RCMP P.J. (Pat) Egan, Insp.***

*We did a file review for that area and have determined that there has only been one call for service this past year. From 2008 to today there have been 15 calls over the past five years. As it stands at the present time the area is not a concern.*

***Regarding Montney Centennial & Blackfoot Parks –Dawson Creek RCMP Scott West, Sgt.***

*I conducted a survey for Blackfoot from 2009 to 2013. There were 8 files that were directly attributed to Blackfoot Park. The calls ranged for shots fired, fireworks, impaired driving in the park, disturbances, and break ins to recreational vehicles (2). There were other calls for service that did not have a criminal aspect. I know there are a few more calls for service but the location code is incorrect and I cannot locate them. Our detachment expends resources to make patrols of all of the parks in the area which includes Blackfoot. We are able to respond to the present level of calls for service at the campground. A campground attendant or attendant patrols would be advantageous on weekends or long weekends to reduce calls for service (peak periods). I did receive feedback in 2011 and 2012 that there were persons who would not use the facility in future due to issues that had occurred. The issues at that time were due to erratic driving in the park and disturbances. A number of these incidents went unreported to the police. As a result of this intelligence our Detachment has increased in patrols in the summer months but a campground attendant may provide an additional measure of public safety for the campers using the park.*

### 4.3 Regional Parks & Trails Advisory Committee

An Advisory Committee was established to assist with the development of the Master Plan. Members consisted of the following individuals from around the PRRD area representing various user groups, government agencies, municipalities, and the general public.

Director Larry Fynn	PRRD Director & Mayor of Pouce Coupe
Director Fred Jarvis	PRRD Director & Mayor of Taylor
Tim Bennett	Recreation Sites & Trails BC
Lloyd Cushway	Local Historian
Dr. Charles Helm	Wolverine Nordic & Mountain Society
Dave Merritt	BC Parks
Pat O'Reilly	Bear Mountain Nordic Ski Association
Hellmut Patzelt	Long-time resident
Jacqueline Walmsley	Gundy Horse Club

The staff representatives of the PRRD included:

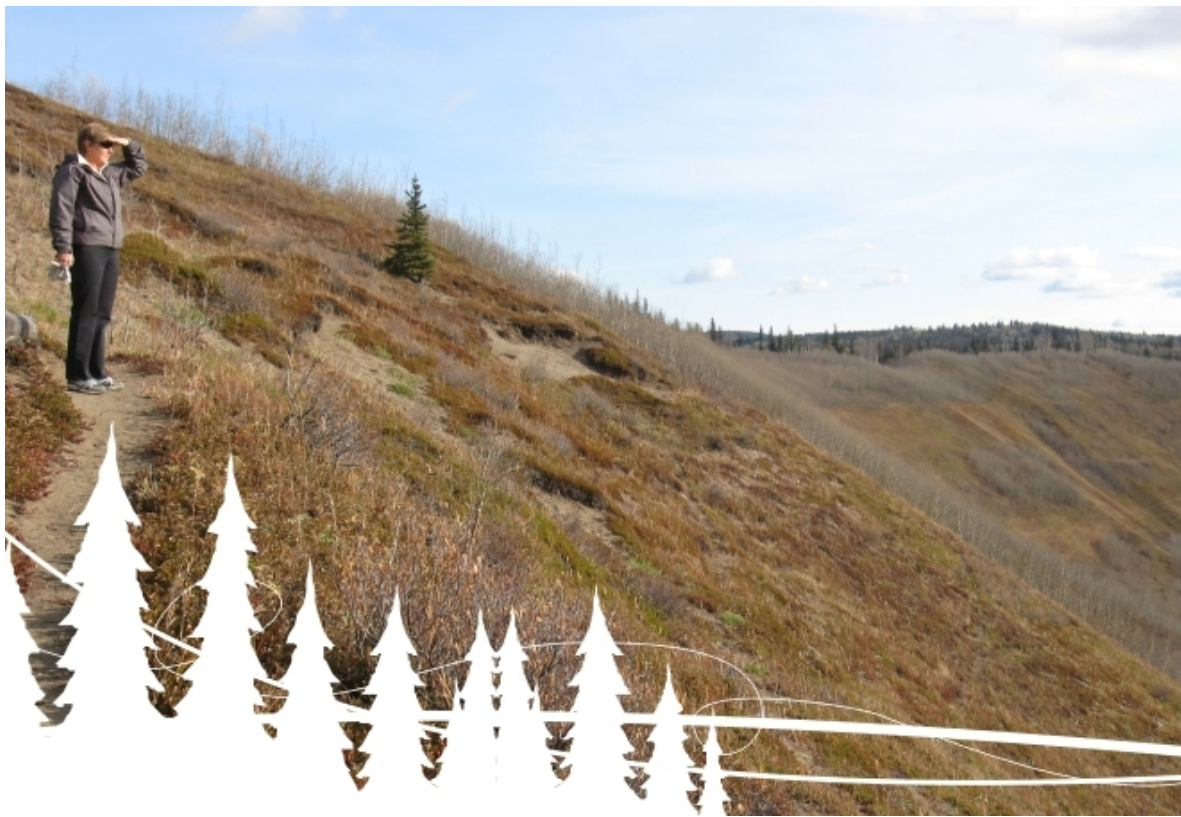
Trish Morgan	Manager of Community Services
Fran Haughian/Jill Rickert	Community Services Coordinator

The Advisory Committee met formally five times and informally over the duration of the project. The Committee brainstormed and developed the Regional Parks System Vision; defined what a regional park is within the PRRD; assisted with establishing the Master Plan goals and objectives; prioritized the recommendations of the Master Plan; and reviewed and



provided direction on the draft material. The Advisory Committee's input was invaluable in completing this Master Plan and it is anticipated that ongoing input and direction will continue for implementation of the recommendations.





## 5.0 The Master Plan

The following section includes: the Vision for the PRRD regional parks and recreational trails support; the Master Plan goals and objectives; a list of management guidelines for the regional park system; and a regional parks classification system. The content of this section was developed with input and assistance from the Advisory Committee and on the basis of comments received through the consultation process.

### 5.1 The Vision

Developed from public input and fine-tuned by the PRRD Regional Parks and Trails Advisory Committee, the vision for the PRRD's regional park system and recreational trail support for the next 10 years is as follows:

The people of the Peace River Regional District value and wish to secure a system of regional parks and support a network of recreational trails to provide:

- A variety of outdoor recreation opportunities;
- An understanding and appreciation of the region's natural assets;
- Ecological, historical, and heritage educational opportunities;
- The protection of natural ecosystems;
- An awareness of the geography and biodiversity of the region; and
- Community linkages, good quality of life, and healthy lifestyle opportunities.

## 5.2 Integration with PRRD Long Range Planning Documents

The Peace River Regional District has long recognized the importance of protecting significant landscapes, environments, views, and parklands through policies, objectives, and guidelines listed within the many Official Community Plans (OCPs) of the PRRD. From the first Regional Park Plan of 1977, to the Regional Parks Information Book, and all the way through to the region's current OCPs, the importance of regional parks and recreational trail support is a constant throughout. The newly adopted OCPs of the last two years all contain recognition of the importance of parks, including such statements as:

"Parks enhance the lifestyle opportunities for residents of the Peace Region and its visitors. Recognizing culturally and ecologically valuable features help protect and promote a unique regional and local identity." (Rural Peace OCP, Bylaw No. 1940, 2011. Page 29)

The OCPs also include various policy statements to support and guide the decisions for regional park system expansion, development, maintenance, and improvements. An example (from the Rural Peace OCP, Bylaw No. 1940, 2011, page 29) is:

**Objective:** To help provide recreational destinations for the public.

**Policy 1.** Lands designated as Park and Natural Environment are delineated on the Plan Maps.

**Policy 2.** Within the Park and Natural Environment designation the principal uses of land will generally include but are not limited to: outdoor recreation,

campgrounds, agriculture, ecological reserves, work that supports ecological protection or conservation or restoration, and structures for interpretive purposes.

**Policy 3.** The Regional District may work in collaboration with the general public, not-for profit groups, government agencies, or other organizations to identify and help protect environmentally sensitive areas from development and sites that contain valued ecosystem components, or sites that are otherwise desirable for protection.

There are many other existing PRRD documents that refer to and effect regional parks and recreational trail support; they are:

- 1977 Draft Regional Park Plan
- Regional Parks Information Book
- Dawson Creek Rural Area OCP Bylaw No. 477, 1986
- Rural Peace OCP, Bylaw No. 1940, 2011
- North Peace Fringe Area OCP, Bylaw No. 1870, 2009
- West Peace OCP, Bylaw No. 1086, 1997
- South Peace Fringe Area OCP
- Regional & Community Park Use Bylaw No. 860, 1994
- Regional Parks Reserve Fund Bylaw No. 1974, 2011
- PRRD Lakeshore Development Guidelines
- PRRD 2011 PRRD Annual Report
- 2007-2012 PRRD Financial Plans (Budgets)

Studies, reports, and strategies undertaken by partner organizations also influence and affect regional parks and recreational trails planning within the PRRD. They include the following:

- 2010 Tourism Related Projects Regional **Parks** Strategy – Northern BC Tourism Association
- 2010 Tourism Related Projects Regional **Trails** Strategy – Northern BC Tourism Association
- Trails Strategy for BC DRAFT – BC Ministry of Tourism, Culture & the Arts – Recreation, Sites & Trails Branch, 2008
- Recreation Trails Strategy for BC, Phase 1 Background Report – Ministry of Tourism, Sport & the Arts, 2007
- Tourism Related Projects – Signage Inventory, Assessment and Signage Plan, 2010

The DRAFT Regional Park Plan of 1977 has been used as the guiding document for the regional park system since its adoption in April 1976 with the “Parks Function.” This document has been very effective at guiding the decisions for the regional park system for the last 35 years despite one unfortunate impact which was the unintended negative consequence of a statement within the “general policies, recommendations and guidelines.” It reads as:

*(c) Development of Regional Parks is oriented for use by the regional population and not out-of-region travellers. It is recommended that these parks should not be advertised to attract more users, though there never should be any discriminatory action against tourist users since everyone is a tourist once in a while.*

This statement and the specific wording influenced the communication strategy for all of the regional parks. Little information was given out in regard to the regional parks. The result is that the majority of PRRD residents, then and now, are not aware of the regional parks. Local citizens do not know the regional parks exist, what amenities are available, or where the parks are located. This lack of awareness was expressed repeatedly in the Wants and Needs Survey and during all of the Open House events.

Many of the other “general policies, recommendations and guidelines” are as relevant today as in 1977 and have been carried forward within this Master Plan in some form. The list of potential park sites is also relevant and the information collected in regard to the environmental concerns, potential appropriate uses, and locations is included in this Master Plan.

### 5.3 Goals and Objectives

The establishment of goals and objectives provides direction for the regional park system as they help guide the decisions about priorities, budgets, and staffing. The four Goals (accompanied by Objectives) detailed below, for the PRRD regional park system and support for the recreational trails of the region, are the result of the ideas, suggestions, values, and comments expressed by the general public, survey respondents, and the Advisory Committee members.

#### Goal 1. QUALITY OF LIFE

**Provide more opportunities for a good [Quality of Life](#) for the citizens and visitors of the Peace River Regional District.**

#### Objectives

- a) Strive to make regional parks and recreational trails fun and relaxing for all users

- b) Foster “regional pride” in the natural environment of the Peace River Regional District
- c) Offer more opportunities for social interactions
- d) Provide more opportunities for general wellness and healthy lifestyles—physical, mental, and spiritual
- e) Protect the natural environment which all area residents enjoy
- f) Provide more opportunities for those with mobility challenges

## Goal 2. MAKING IT WORK

**Provide a *Quality Regional Park System* for residents and visitors of the Peace River Regional District.**

### Objectives:

- a) Ensure regional parks are safe and inviting
- b) Ensure regional parks are fairly distributed throughout the Electoral areas of the Peace River Regional District
- c) Encourage linkages to other parks, recreation sites, and amenities
- d) Offer more opportunities for a diverse range of outdoor uses and activities within regional parks
- e) Work to meet the present and future needs of park users
- f) Ensure effective long-term planning
- g) Develop sound park system management policies
- h) Ensure parkland is secured for future regional park opportunities at development stage (including resource development)
- i) Ensure regional parks complement other park systems (e.g., municipal, provincial) and do not duplicate services in general area
- j) Ensure parks provide regionally significant representation historically, geographically, and ecologically
- k) Identify areas of environmental, historical, or recreational sensitivity and provide for their protection/preservation
- l) Ensure regional parks provide user-friendly opportunities for all citizens of the Peace River Regional District
- m) Consider the maintenance and development of the existing parks a priority over the acquisition and development of new parks
- n) Ensure parks maintenance and development is cost-effective
- o) Provide adequate budgets to ensure park maintenance is held at appropriate levels



- p) Where appropriate, provide universal accessibility
- q) Provide coordinated training for volunteers
- r) Seek out joint funding for large-scale projects

### Goal 3. TELLING PEOPLE

**Establish an *Effective Communication Strategy* for all elements of the Regional Park system and for Trail support.**

#### Objectives

- a) Support the development of a signage standard
- b) Foster an awareness of the need for environmental protection and the importance of preserving wildlife and habitat connectivity in the Peace River Regional District
- c) Inform park users of the location of floodplain areas, their environmental sensitivities as well as the dangers and safety concerns
- d) Ensure more educational opportunities to highlight and promote natural, heritage, and historic features
- e) Include interpretive components of natural, heritage, and historic features in park communication, such as on signage
- f) Promote regional parks and recreational trails prominently within the Regional District, as well as to tourists
- g) Promote and support all prevention activities to deal with invasive plants in accordance with the *BC Weed Control Act*
- h) Provide directional, internal, trailhead, and interpretive signage for all regional parks
- i) Provide mapping for regional parks
- j) Provide more funding opportunities to support the mapping of recreational trails in the PRRD
- k) Provide promotional material regarding regional parks and recreational trails on the Peace River Regional District website and other online media
- l) Provide promotional material regarding regional parks and recreational trails through local and regional print media
- m) Encourage appropriate levels of promotion so as to not exceed the intended use and capacity of the regional parks and trails

### Goal 4. BEING SUPPORTIVE

**Support all aspects of recreational trail development, maintenance, and promotion and ensure long-term viability through the recreational trail user groups grant program.**

## Objectives

- a) Support and encourage user groups, volunteer organizations, and other government agencies as they bring new recreational trail ideas forward
- b) Support the designation, development, and maintenance of recreational trails for all-terrain vehicle use and activities that do not undermine the environmental sustainability of the region
- c) Assist user groups in working with adjacent landowners and Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR) lands
- d) Provide information regarding recreational trail registration and development
- e) Provide professional support, where required, for recreational trail registration, development, and maintenance
- f) Provide funding for recreational trail registration, development, and maintenance
- g) Work with partners, user groups, and government agencies to take advantage of existing rights-of-way, utility corridors, and unused rail rights-of-way
- h) Support the development and maintenance of Regionally Significant recreational trails (environmental/heritage/historic/geographic significance – e.g., Trans Canada Trail)
- i) Ensure sound trail planning and design to reduce maintenance costs and minimize potential negative effects on environmentally sensitive areas

## 5.4 Regional Park Management Guidelines

Regional Parks within the PRRD are managed by the PRRD Community Services department. There are many points of view and specific site information to be considered when developing and managing regional parks to ensure harmony with the surrounding land uses as well as among park users. Management, maintenance, and effective park improvements are essential components in the long-term success of a regional park. The following are recommended as essential considerations for effective regional park management.

### 5.4.1 Park Uses

Defining and regulating regional park uses through a bylaw helps the PRRD determine budgets, staffing, and priorities. Establishing appropriate park uses in a bylaw sets manageable guidelines for the conduct and activities of park users. The park uses listed within a bylaw are intended to encourage reasonable use of the park property and promote a safe, enjoyable atmosphere for everyone wishing to use any of the five existing regional parks.

The PRRD is committed to responsible stewardship of its regional parks as demonstrated through its existing Park Use Bylaw No. 860, 1994. This Bylaw has guided decisions on activities to protect the PRRD regional parks, addresses health and safety issues, and allows for preservation of natural areas for the enjoyment of all residents of the PRRD. Although this Master Plan is recommending revision of Bylaw 860, most of the permitted park uses listed within it are still supported and should remain with amendments as previously discussed as there are several additional uses that the PRRD could consider. For instance, long-term concessions could be studied where the service proposed is essential or supportive to the overall operation and concept of the regional park in which it is located. A lease or rental agreement by bylaw could be adopted by the Regional Board to regulate the situation.

The existing Bylaw 860 identifies activities not permitted as well as those encouraged. The activities currently prohibited from PRRD regional parks include the following:

- No carrying or discharging of loaded firearms, use of bows or crossbows;
- No hunting, hurting, molesting or disturbing any wild animal or bird;
- At all times, all pets should be kept on a leash no longer than 3 metres in length;
- No loud music or loud noise permitted between 11:00 pm and 7:00 am;
- No operation of all-terrain vehicles or unlicensed vehicles; and
- Maximum stay in overnight parks is 14 days.

As previously mentioned, this list needs to be amended to the current situation in each specific regional park, specifically in terms of firearms and ATV use.

In general, the PRRD has not charged park usage fees, but may consider changes to this policy. However, where an agreement has been or may be made to pass control of a specific facility, area, or building within a regional park to a community group or registered non-profit organization, that group may be given the authority to charge admission to their specific area. Montney Centennial Regional Park has such an agreement with the Northland Blazers Snowmobile Club.

This Master Plan recommends that the existing PRRD Park Use Bylaw No. 860, 1994 be amended as necessary to provide flexibility by allowing different regulations for different parks.

### ***5.4.2 Park Planning***

In order to support ongoing long-range planning for the regional park system which has started with this Master Plan, further planning is recommended with development of a Park Management Plan for each existing regional park. As these individual Park

Management Plans are created, it is recommended that they incorporate the vision, goals, and objectives of this Master Plan.

Looking at each regional park individually is important as it allows for the protection of unique environments and the provision of all of the necessary facilities to accommodate the activities and uses that the park provides. A Park Management Plan should address and plan for the detailed concerns and unique attributes of the regional park it covers through individual maintenance and improvement programs.

These Park Management Plans should outline short- and long-term actions for each park, including those compiled through this Master Plan process, by establishing desired outcomes for the specific park and identifying and prioritizing future improvements.

#### ***5.4.3 Park Operations, Management, and Standards***

The operation, management and maintenance of regional parks are currently and will continue to be administered by the Regional District through the Community Services department. With the adoption of this Master Plan, a more focused effort will be required to manage the regional parks and ensure the recommendations in this Master Plan are completed. Currently, parks and recreation trails are managed by staff in the Community Services department on a reactionary basis.

It is recommended in this Master Plan that the equivalent of one full time position be added for approximately a two year term in the Community Services Department. It will be important that the effectiveness of this position be reassessed after the 2-year time period. In order to fulfill several recommendations of this Master Plan, it is suggested that the initial responsibility for the full-time position include:

- Regional Park Management Plans;
- Regional Park Signage Strategy;
- Regional Park Bylaws and Policies;
- Regional Park Education and Interpretation Strategy;
- Supervise the Pilot Project for Blackfoot Park Summer Park Attendant;
- Guidelines for Trails Support Grant, and
- Coordinate Mapping for Trails and Regional Parks.

Currently agreements are in place for each regional park for a seasonal contractor who is either an individual or community organization to provide basic maintenance such as, garbage pickup, toilet clean up and lawn mowing etc. where needed. PRRD public works staff also contributes to the maintenance and upkeep of the parks outside of the summer

contractors' obligations as well as the improvements to the parks that are outside the contractors' ability and qualifications to complete (e.g. dangerous tree removal, road repair, etc.).

It is recommended that one additional half-time public works summer staff person be added as a pilot project for the first two years after this plan is adopted. At the end of the two-year time this position should be reassessed for its effectiveness to the overall operations of the regional parks system.

In order to control operations costs for the regional parks system it is recommended that a set of standards be adopted by the Regional District for common park amenities and facilities, such as: picnic tables, fire pits and outhouses. This will improve efficiency and cost for the entire system.

Included in these standards this Master Plan recommends the continued management of invasive species in the regional parks. Additional efforts may include the training of all parks staff and park contractors to identify and report invasive plant species on their annual, monthly or daily site visits. The regional parks staff will work closely with the Invasive Plant staff to determine the appropriate course of action to deal with the observed situation in the parks.

Although there are no user-fees in any of the PRRD regional parks, it may become necessary to enforce user-fees to ensure a continued quality visitor experience. It is recommended that user-fees be reviewed during the development of each individual Park Management Plan.

The Regional District recognizes that hazard trees and debris in regional parks requires some management. Specific risks will be assessed with each park's Park Management Plan. The Regional District will continue to minimize these risks through appropriate management measures that include (but are not limited to) removal of forest fuels (standing or fallen dead trees and debris) and hazard trees, and bank stabilization through applicable re-vegetation with native species.

#### ***5.4.4 Climate Change and Mitigation***

This Master Plan recommends that the Regional District work to reduce the greenhouse gas emissions associated with regional park operations and maintenance. This can be accomplished through more efficient use of park vehicles, equipment, and maintenance scheduling. The Regional District is also encouraged to take potential impacts of climate change into account in planning regional park projects and activities. These activities



could include the planting of more trees in regional parks, where appropriate, as a carbon sequestration measure.

#### **5.4.5 Barrier-free Access**

Barrier-free access refers to facilities being safely accessible by people with physical disabilities and health impairments. This Master Plan recommends that the Regional District endeavor to provide barrier-free access, as well as some accessible features such as hard trails, viewpoints, picnic tables, and toilets, within some of the regional parks, especially the most popular parks. With this in mind, it is important that barrier-free access possibilities take into account the limitations presented by topography, environmental and cultural sensitivity as well as total cost.

When these accessible features are added to the regional parks, it is important that these new features be included in the recommended Communication Strategy and published in future brochures and website materials about the regional park system.

#### **5.4.6 Communication Project**

Due to the expressed lack of knowledge and information about the regional parks, this Master Plan recommends that the Regional District, through an overall communication strategy, create a communication project specific to regional parks and recreational trails to inform the citizens of the PRRD of the existence, location, and amenities of all of the regional parks. It is recommended that the communication project be designed to give visitors an appreciation of the outdoor recreation opportunities and the natural environment of the regional park system. Interpretive brochures, publications, and a separate page on the regional district website are components of the communication project should support and link to those prepared by other agencies and community groups.

This communication project will require funds and a budget specific to these components of the project. It is important that the communication project not only include information about the location of the regional parks, but the installation of directional and internal signage, the creation and publication of effective maps, and descriptive information in paper form and online.

Extended overnight stays for working crews have become an issue in recent years. These working crews occupy camping sites in the parks for weeks at a time leaving little opportunity for residents or visitors who may be interested in camping in the regional parks. As part of the communications project, it is recommended that literature and

signage be made available at regional parks to discourage extended overnight stays for working crews.

#### **5.4.7 Park Classification**

The Park Classification System is a general framework to provide direction to regional park planning, development, and management by grouping parks according to certain common typical characteristics. The classification system reflects the many diverse park types, uses, and values. The regional park classification system will provide guidance in the following ways:

1. To assist in day-to-day regional decision-making for efficient parkland asset management and in the preparation of park management plans;
2. To better manage current and future regional park inventories as well as to help the PRRD prepare a land acquisition strategy;
3. To determine appropriate staffing levels to manage the regional parks; and
4. To manage public expectations for future parks and their uses.

The regional park classification system is an important tool for achieving the goals of the regional park system while providing opportunities to protect the natural beauty; allow for outdoor recreation activities; and encourage stewardship opportunities for the natural environment. Classifying the existing PRRD regional parks will help to identify gaps in the current system as well as determine what kind of future parks are needed, and where.

Each regional park classification plays a different role in achieving the identified goals and objectives of the Master Plan and regional park system.

A classification system details the different management emphasis needed for each type of regional park. Although the regional parks are grouped into categories according to certain common typical characteristics, it is important to consider each existing and future regional park as a unique entity due to its location, geography, and environmental characteristics. The classification system will help determine which park types are most appropriate for different outdoor activities as well as guide park management strategies accordingly. The regional parks of the PRRD are classified by their predominant characteristics and purpose which now helps to define the minimally acceptable levels of service and facilities for each category.

The classes of the PRRD regional parks have been established based on their characteristics and the values expressed by the general public, survey respondents, and Advisory Committee members. Based on the Master Plan's Vision and Goals, three attributes of the region should be represented in the regional park system:

- Activity or use;
- Geographic representation; and
- Sensitive ecosystems and areas requiring protection.

It is recommended that a park's classification for management focus can only be changed by a resolution of the PRRD Board.

The five main Classification areas for the benefit of management strategies are:

1. **Overnight Recreation Area**
2. **Day Use Recreation Area**
3. **Regional Conservation/Protection Area**
4. **Look-out/Scenic View Points**
5. **Reserve Lands**

Criteria for each park class are provided in the individual descriptions below. The general areas of consideration are:

1. **Purpose** – indicates the general park use.
2. **Character and Extent of Development** – indicates typical facility types, the extent of development, the general experience a user may expect, and any special considerations. Site-specific facilities and uses are determined through the park management planning process for individual parks.

Each of these representation attributes is discussed below.

### 1. Overnight Recreation Area

**Purpose** – Primary use is for overnight camping.

**Character and Extent of Development** – Provides opportunities for overnight camping for up to a two-week period. Picnic tables, fire pits, and pit toilets are provided and maintained. Parks intended for an assortment of outdoor experiences and activities, specific to each park. Facilities will be developed to support the level of use determined for each park. The area should lend itself to development for a variety of uses that meet recreational needs of the park class type. The exact uses will be outlined in the park management plan.

### 2. Day Use Recreation area

**Purpose** – Primary use is for day use recreational activities and events.

**Character and Extent of Development** – Provides opportunities for site specific recreational activities. Education and community events facilities will be developed to support the level of use determined for each park, including picnic tables, fire pits, and pit toilets. These areas will try to accommodate a range of appropriate outdoor experiences and activities based upon the area's suitability for development for various uses and capacity to withstand intensive public use. The exact uses will be outlined in the park management plan.

### 3. Regional Conservation/Protection Area

**Purpose** – Primary use is to protect sensitive ecosystems, fragile environments, or cultural and historically significant areas and features.

**Character and Extent of Development** – Only low- or minimal-impact recreation activities are permitted within this park class. These areas will generally have basic facilities, which may include trails, parking areas, pit toilets, and signage. Environmental interpretive facilities may be permitted provided they also have minimal impact on the site-specific environment. The type and level of activities and facilities will be determined through the management plan process. These areas protect key locations that are significant to the character of the region. Levels of visitor use and development are contingent upon the capacity of the "special feature" to withstand use.

### 4. Look-out/Scenic View Points

**Purpose** – Primary use is to provide areas for look-outs to a unique or scenic feature.

**Character and Extent of Development** – Small area parks developed to provide access to a look-out or scenic view point. The basic facilities provided may include parking, picnic tables, and signage (including interpretive information). Additional development will be specific to the site, feature, and purpose and will be determined through the park management plan.

### 5. Reserve Lands

**Purpose** – Primary use is to provide land for future regional park use.

**Character and Extent of Development** – Reserve land is land held by PRRD but is not open for public use. Reserve land may be leased for activities that are consistent with the interim management guidelines for the Regional Park Reserve (e.g., industrial or agricultural use). The land reserve class will permit PRRD Parks to acquire land, label the area as a regional park or trail, and phase in visitor facilities and services over time, based on demonstrated public demand. This approach can help reduce the immediate

financial impact on PRRD Parks when new land is acquired. It will also provide a statement to the public and other levels of government about the PRRD regional park system intention to acquire new parkland. One of the reasons for this classification is the unsuitability of some property for immediate park use. There may be insufficient public access, unsafe conditions, a need to protect natural or built resources, or the need to acquire contiguous land parcels. Such property will remain in Reserve status until the constraints to public access and safety can be addressed. While in Reserve status, the property will be maintained at the minimum level necessary. The PRRD will prepare interim management guidelines for these areas to provide initial strategic management direction on objectives, actions, and costs.

Each existing regional park is classified within one of the main categories. There is flexibility inherent in each category which can be reflected in the individual park management plans.

Previously in Section 3.1 Existing Regional Parks Inventory, the appropriate Park Classification for each existing regional park was identified. The following table shows the distribution and gaps for the various types of regional parks within the PRRD.

**Table 3: Classification of Existing Regional Parks**

Regional Park	Park Classifications				
	Overnight Recreation Park	Day Use Recreation Park	Regional Conservation/Protection Park	Look-out/Scenic View Points	Reserve Lands
Blackfoot Regional Park	●				
Montney Centennial Regional Park	●				
Minaker River Regional Park	●				
Spencer Tuck Regional Park		●			
Sundance Lake Regional Park		●			

It is apparent from the table that the current regional park system lacks representation in the Conservation/Protection, Scenic View Points, and Reserve Lands classifications.



#### **5.4.8 Acquisition and Disposition of Regional District Parkland**

Under Section 176 of the *Local Government Act*, Regional Districts possess broad corporate powers to “acquire, hold, manage and dispose of land, improvements, personal property or other property, and any interest or right in or with respect to that property.” This includes land for parks and public open spaces.

As part of the management of the regional park system, it is recommended that the Regional District establish a process for the acquisition and disposition of regional parkland. Currently the PRRD does not have either an acquisition or disposition policy to guide their decisions on obtaining or disposing of regional parkland property.

Although the majority of land proposed for future regional park and regional trail development is on Crown land, some opportunities may involve the acquisition of private property. When Crown land is involved, the Regional District will work with the Province to identify and designate these Crown lands for future Regional Park status. This could be in the form of a full purchase or by way of the establishment of Right-of-Use easements, the most common arrangement. Prior to any acquisition processes occurring, it is recommended that all sites proposed for future regional parks be assessed using the acquisition criteria set forth in Section 6.2.1 Acquisition Criteria. All acquisition decisions relating to the initiation and finalization of negotiations with the Crown or a property owner shall be made by the Regional Board or a representative of the Board.

This Master Plan does not limit the Regional District to those potential sites listed within this document. It is hoped and anticipated that the Regional District will take advantage of unexpected and unplanned opportunities to acquire land with high regional park values. It is recommended that unexpected opportunities be explored.

The Regional District may consider the sale or other disposal (including the return of leased Crown land to the Province) of land or lands within designated Regional Parks which may eventually be considered surplus to park- or trail-related needs. It is essential that the authorization for disposal of land include consideration of the future regional park needs of the Regional District.

The recommended disposition policy will outline the process for the disposition of regional parkland. Specifically, this Master Plan recommends that the disposition policy include the following:

- The Regional District may consider sale or other disposal (including the return of leased Crown land to the Province) of land in designated Regional Parks considered surplus to park needs.

- It is essential that the authorization for disposal of land or improvements include consideration of the future regional park needs of the District.
- The process for disposition of parkland will include public consultation.
- In such circumstances that involve a cash sale, the disposition will typically be made for fair market value unless the Board's goals, principles, or criteria suggest disposition at a lower value is appropriate. It is recommended that the Revenue from such sales be placed into the Regional Parks Reserve Fund.
- In order to protect the long-term interests of the regional park system and make the best possible use of surplus facilities (including land, improvements, and surplus amenities), the Board will consider each case individually and will choose from among all options available the one that best suits the particular site and the needs of the Regional District, including transferring the lands within the Regional District.

It is extremely important during any disposition of parkland that the residents and user groups are informed and consulted. This requirement for consultation was expressed many times during the Open House events where several comments were received expressing concern with the way the Beaton River Regional Park was disposed of in 2009. Historic decisions by the Board and the subsequent unsettled public response demonstrate the need for a disposition policy or bylaw.

The acquisition of future parks will include consultation with the general public and stakeholders along with input from the First Nations. During the review process, all proposed sites will be assessed using the acquisition criteria set forth below in Section 6.2.1, and the results of this consultation will be presented to the Regional Board for its consideration and decision on creating a new regional park.

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## 6.0 PARKS – PRIORITIES 2013-2023

This section will outline the priorities for park improvement and development for the next 10 years (2013-2023). The priorities that follow are meant as a general guide for development and improvement and may be changed if situations warrant it.

### 6.1 Existing Parks – Future Development and Improvements

During the Master Plan public consultation process and through general investigation, it was determined that the regional park system as a whole as well as each existing regional park require upgrades, attention, and improvements in order to meet the expectations of the residents of the PRRD and priorities of the Master Plan. In general, the regional park system requires implementation of the following projects:

- 1) Create a **Park Management Plan** for each individual existing park and all newly created regional parks
- 2) Establish a **Communication Project** – e.g., signage, such as highway, directional, entrance, information, and interpretive signs; detailed map showing the location of the regional parks; and print and online media information distribution

- 3) Develop **Regional Park Standards** – standardize amenities and site furniture (e.g., picnic tables, washrooms, fire rings)

For the five existing PRRD regional parks, the following park improvement priorities have been identified.

#### **6.1.1      *Minaker River Regional Park***

- 1) Improve/upgrade road access
- 2) Assess dangerous tree situation
- 3) Assess noxious weeds
- 4) Assess existing gymkhana amenities to see if they are being utilized and/or meeting the needs of users, and assess safety and liability of existing amenities

#### **6.1.2      *Spencer Tuck Regional Park***

- 1) In consultation with the site contractors and local user groups, the following were suggested as possible improvements to the Spencer Tuck Regional Park:
  - Permanent picnic shelter
  - Trails clean-up
  - Upgrade picnic area
  - Replace outhouses
  - Investigate available land across the road for future expansion of the park, possibly for overnight camping

#### **6.1.3      *Sundance Lake Regional Park***

- 1) Assess whether the regional park boundary should be expanded on the east side of the lake to include designated camp sites
- 2) Assess whether a fixed boat launch should be installed on the lake

#### **6.1.4      *Montney Centennial Regional Park***

- 1) Assess whether there is a need to create additional camp sites within the park by looking at use in relation to Charlie Lake Provincial Park and Beaton Provincial Park
- 2) If there is a need, add camping sites on the upper bench. This will require site work to clear land, construct a new roadway, flatten and gravel the new site areas, and potentially install an additional pit toilet.



- 3) Assess and improve the existing trails and consider creating new trails. Draft map of trails to be included in park information online, etc.
- 4) Consult with ATV (Northland Trailblazers) user group and see if additional opportunities for partnerships exist
- 5) Improve boat launch
- 6) Improve and identify day use, including parking area
- 7) Assess existing park access

#### **6.1.5      *Blackfoot Regional Park***

- 1) Continue annual danger tree removal and replanting to ensure safety
- 2) Assess playground equipment and determine if additions or upgrades are warranted
- 3) Add picnic table or bench to playground area
- 4) Add at least two additional garbage receptacles
- 5) Develop picnic/overflow area with pit toilets
- 6) Create additional campsite pads along the west side of the park from the first entrance to the tank-loader area
- 7) Investigate the installation of an on-site sani-station
- 8) Improve and identify day use area, including parking area
- 9) Integrate with BC Hydro's plan for new boat launch and parking area
- 10) Work with BC Hydro to install signs warning that river level may rise rapidly without warning (therefore no camping along shoreline)
- 11) Identify the floodplain area on the park map and install appropriate signage in the park itself to identify environmental and safety concerns
- 12) Investigate development of a walking trail system within the park
- 13) Investigate the feasibility of providing a summer park attendant

#### **6.1.6      *Iver Johnson Memorial Community Park***

Iver Johnson Memorial Community Park is listed in Bylaw 860 as a Regional Park, is located within the Hasler community and is currently not being used as a regional or community park. This property is currently under review to determine

its best use which could include being developed as a regional park or placed into some other regional district land inventory.

## 6.2 Future Park Acquisition

In order to accomplish the goals identified in this Master Plan, it is recommended that the Regional District consider the possibility of adding lands for regional park purposes in the future. This can be accomplished by acquiring land through purchase, lease, or tenure agreements, or by donation or gift. Acquisition by donation or gift is permitted under Section 314 of the *Local Government Act* which details the acceptance of property on trust. Lands could also be reallocated from within the existing PRRD land inventory.

Using available Crown land for regional parks is a very attractive option and has been an extremely successful method for acquiring regional parkland within the PRRD in the past. Using the list of potential regional park sites included in Appendix A, inviting public suggestions, or initiating discussions with the Province to identify Crown land sites for future Regional Park status are all options for acquiring future regional park sites.

BC Hydro owns land with access to water bodies that are currently used recreationally by residents of the Regional District. These recreational opportunities exist today and are a valuable part of the parkland network in the Regional District. In the event that Site C Dam moves ahead, additional recreation opportunities may become available.

It is recommended that the Regional District consider working with BC Hydro and other agencies as partners in both reviewing potential sites for future regional parks or during the acquisition stage.

It should be noted that when the PRRD holds land for regional park purposes, the PRRD Board is not obligated to develop, operate, or maintain it as a regional park.

### 6.2.1 Acquisition Criteria

The acquisition criteria are the standards by which potential park sites will be judged to determine if they will make acceptable PRRD regional parks. The list below details the best management practices for the selection of new parkland in the PRRD. The use of these acquisition criteria will contribute to efficient expansion of the PRRD regional park system as well as future park development and management.

The criteria are not listed in priority order and all criteria are weighted equally. It is anticipated that potential park sites will have to meet the majority of criteria, if not all, to be viewed positively as a regional park. When reviewing a site, it is recommended that every criterion be addressed or considered in some way.

**1) LANDS ALREADY OWNED**

Land that is currently owned by the Peace River Regional District will be considered first, where appropriate, to ensure cost-effectiveness.

**2) GEOGRAPHIC COVERAGE**

It is important that attempts be made to ensure that the regional park system effectively distributes parkland throughout the PRRD. Potential sites should be of interest to the whole region in the interests of servicing all PRRD residents equally.

**3) ENVIRONMENTAL, EDUCATIONAL, OR HERITAGE REPRESENTATION**

Consideration of representative or regionally significant landscapes are also important when developing a new regional park or preserving an existing one. Balancing wildlife values against the proposed benefits of park development should also be considered along with the unique historic, cultural, ecological, and educational aspects of the area.

**4) COSTS**

Undertaking a feasibility study for all new potential parks to understand acquisition, development, operational, and maintenance costs is necessary. It will be important that the associated costs be in line with current and projected budgets.

**5) PARTNERSHIPS**

Fostering partnerships with interest groups or other government agencies to will aid in offsetting costs to acquire or fund, develop, and/or maintain existing or future regional parks. It is recommended that the PRRD seek out these partnership opportunities where possible.

**6) ACCESSIBILITY**

The relative ease with which the public and the PRRD could access the site is an important factor. Sites of regional interest with potentially significant accessibility constraints (i.e., remote/isolated sites without public access) or specific known limitations on the potential to secure the site as a regional park may not be feasible.

**7) PROXIMITY**

Parks that are located in close proximity to existing parks or similar amenities should be considered less favourably. Similarly, if sites are already protected under Provincial or Municipal Park or recreational site designations, they may not need Regional Park

status. It is the PRRD's intent to complement, not compete with or take over, existing park areas.

#### **8) ALREADY ESTABLISHED AS AN UNOFFICIAL PARK OR TRAILHEAD**

It is recommended that the PRRD favourably consider areas for park establishment that already demonstrate a high utilization rate. The new site should already support recreational activities or have the ability to support activities that are in high demand (e.g., hiking, picnicking, and fishing). Let's find the hidden gems!

#### **9) SITE SAFETY AND REGIONAL DISTRICT CAPACITY TO MAINTAIN**

User/site safety as well as the Regional District's ability to maintain the site in at a minimum expected regional park status level is all important components to be considered in selecting a potential site.

#### **10) AVOIDANCE OF PRIVATE PROPERTY**

All future regional parks will be developed in a way that will ensure avoiding access to or over privately owned lands.

### ***6.2.2 Potential Future Regional Parks***

Although the expansion of the regional park system is not necessary to meet the vision, goals and objectives identified within this Master Plan, the PRRD should be open to examining new opportunities for parks in the future. Should a potential future regional park site be considered the process should involve public and stakeholder input along with First Nations consultation before being presented to the Regional Board for consideration.

Through the Needs and Wants survey, the Open House events, input from various stakeholders, and consultation with the Regional Parks and Trails Advisory Committee, a list of suggested regional park locations has been compiled for the Master Plan. The sites within the list are ideas only. They have not been located on a map, they have not been reviewed using the Acquisition Criteria listed above, nor has there been a site inspection. They are simply a collection of the ideas of the residents of the PRRD. The sites demonstrate the variety and uniqueness found throughout the Regional District and are listed in alphabetical order, with as much information as possible for each suggestion, in Appendix A.

The majority of potential park sites occur on land that is not owned by the PRRD, for example, BC Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure (MoTI) river accesses. Acquiring selected sites for development as regional parks requires a License of

Occupation with MoTI permitting PRRD to construct facilities and operate them for park and recreation purposes. Other sites may be under the jurisdiction of other provincial agencies and long-term licenses or leases will need to be negotiated with them in a similar fashion.

A full list of potential regional parks along with their anecdotal descriptions are listed in Appendix A.

- Bear Mountain/Radar Lake/Vieux Springs
- Beaton River
- Bickford – Chetwynd
- Bullmoose Marshes – Tumbler Ridge
- Cameron Lake
- Cecil Lake
- Copeland Beach
- Dokie Road
- East Pine Area
- Flatbed Tracks area including Flatbed Falls
- German Lake
- Gundy (Brown's Pit) Trails
- Halfway Graham
- Hart Lake near Chetwynd
- Hudson's Hope Heat Vents
- Murray Lake
- "Old Fort Site" at Fort St. John
- Old Nelson Crossing
- Parkland Road
- Pinnacle Ridge/Quality Lake
- Pine River
- Sheardale area
- Tepee Falls
- Windfall Lake

Potential sites explored in the 1977 Park Plan Draft document include:

- Alces River Crossing (Moose River)
- Murdale Lake
- Big Lake
- East Pine & Murray River confluence

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## 7.0 RECREATIONAL TRAILS – PRIORITIES 2013-2023

In a recent study by the BC Ministry of Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Operations, *The Social and Economic Impacts of BC Recreation Sites & Trails*, it was identified that approximately 85% of BC Rec Sites & Trails users were locals, living within close proximity to the trails they used. Although this was a provincial study, it still relates to the PRRD area and demonstrates that most recreational trail users in the PRRD are residents. These statistics can provide confidence that any support the PRRD gives to the recreational trail user groups will be benefiting the citizens of the PRRD.

In this Master Plan, as previously mentioned, a recreational trail is defined as follows:

**A recreation trail is a path or route solely or partly used for one or more recreation functions and is regionally significant within the PRRD but not necessarily owned, managed or maintained by the Regional District.**

## 7.1 Guidelines for Support

The Peace River Regional District operates over 60 service functions with a very small staff of less than 40 and as result does not have the resources to directly develop or maintain recreational trails within its jurisdiction unless they occur within a regional park. The Regional District does recognize the importance of recreational trails for its citizens in terms of enhanced quality of life, health and well-being benefits, economic benefits, protection and conservation of the environment, and preservation of local history and culture. Through this Master Plan, the PRRD aims to develop methods to provide support for the development, maintenance, and improvements of recreational trails within the region. With input from the Open House events, the Wants and Needs survey, and stakeholders and with the fine-tuning of the Advisory Committee, the following statements are effective and achievable ways in which the PRRD can provide support for recreational trails within the PRRD.

This Master Plan recommends actions to support recreational trail development within the PRRD. These recommendations include:

- creating an annual budget for the Recreational Trails Support Grant and program;
- supporting the creation of a regional map showing the location of all registered trails and trailheads and their intended recreation use;
- establishing a communication project that will provide opportunities for all recreational trail user groups to collaborate on ways to accommodate a wide variety of users by sharing information and having open discussions; and
- encouraging partnerships in maintaining trails and trailheads.

## 7.2 Possible Criteria for Determining Trails Support

### 1) LANDS ALREADY OWNED

Land that is currently owned by the Peace River Regional District and Crown land will be considered essential in ensuring public access.

### 2) GEOGRAPHIC COVERAGE

It is recommended that attempts be made to ensure that the regional trail system effectively distributes trails throughout the PRRD. Potential sites should be of interest to the whole region in the interests of servicing all PRRD residents equally.

### 3) ENVIRONMENTAL, EDUCATIONAL, OR HERITAGE REPRESENTATION

Representative or regionally significant landscapes should be considered when developing a new trail or preserving an existing one. Potential sites should be chosen to represent the diverse landscapes that the area encompasses. Balancing wildlife values

against the proposed benefits of trail development should also be considered along with the unique historic, cultural, ecological, and educational aspects of the area.

#### **4) COSTS**

Development, maintenance and ongoing operational costs must be identified to be reasonably manageable by the organization responsible for trail management.

#### **5) PARTNERSHIPS**

Fostering partnerships with interest groups or other government agencies to will aid in offsetting costs to acquire or fund, develop, and/or maintain existing or future regional trails. It is recommended that the PRRD seek out these partnership opportunities where possible.

#### **6) ACCESSIBILITY**

The relative ease with which the public and the PRRD could access the site is an important factor. Sites of regional interest with potentially significant accessibility constraints (i.e., remote/isolated sites without public access) or specific known limitations on the potential to secure the site as a trail may not be feasible.

#### **7) PROXIMITY**

Trails that are located in close proximity to existing trails and parks or similar amenities should be considered.

#### **8) ALREADY ESTABLISHED AS AN UNOFFICIAL PARK OR TRAILHEAD**

It is recommended that the PRRD consider favourably areas for trail establishment or maintenance that already demonstrate a high utilization rate.

#### **9) SITE SAFETY AND CAPACITY TO MAINTAIN**

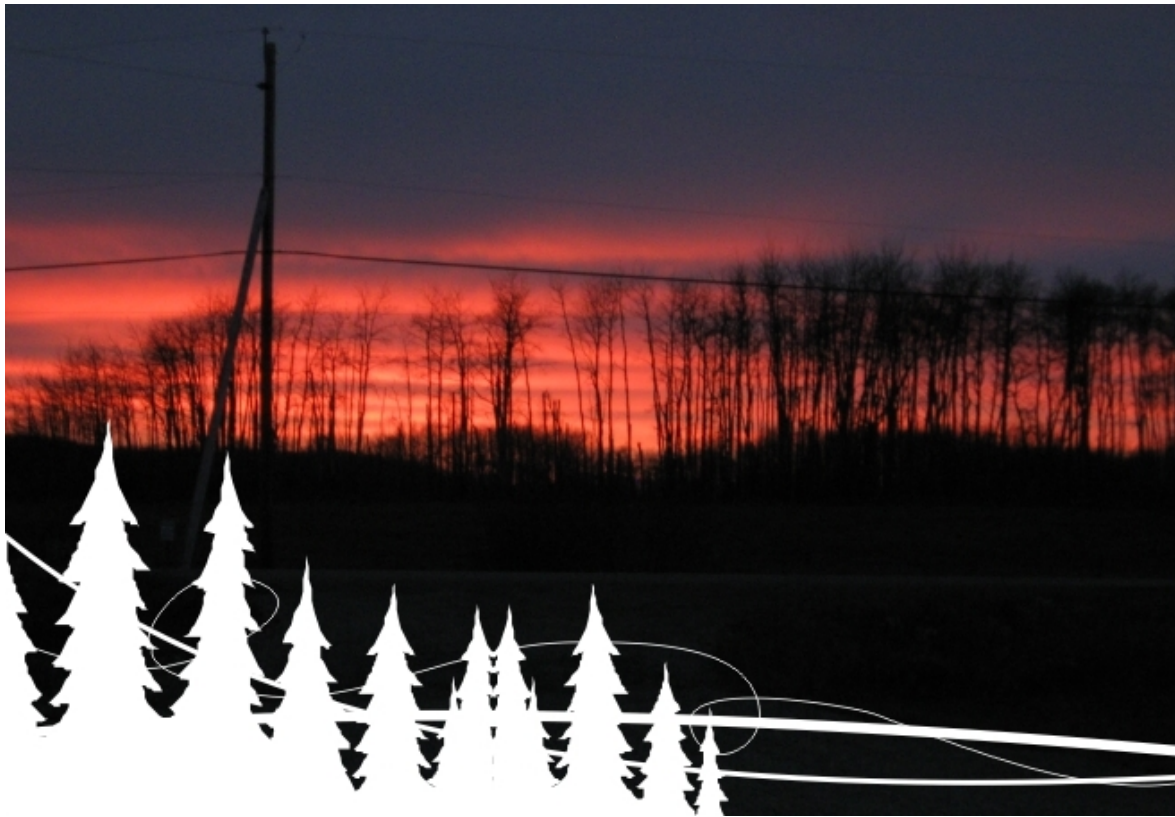
User/site safety needs to be reviewed and considered for all potential trails within PRRD regional parks sites as well as the Regional District's ability to maintain the site within their park. Trails not operated by the PRRD must also be considered in terms of user/site safety to ensure the non-profit groups are able to maintain them to a reasonable and safe standard expected of a natural trail.

#### **10) AVOIDANCE OF PRIVATE PROPERTY**

All future trails supported by the PRRD will be developed in a way that will ensure avoiding access to or over privately owned lands.

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## 8.0 PARTNERSHIPS AND RELATIONSHIPS

The continued success of the regional parks system requires maintenance, future improvements and possible parkland acquisition. These efforts will rely on the help, support and assistance of many partners, such as private companies, local municipalities, First Nations, advocacy groups, user groups and local residents. It is very important that the Regional District share this Master Plan, its recommendations and all relating documents with its many partners.

It will be extremely important that the Regional District continue to work with the member municipalities to develop continuity among the regional and municipal recreation trail networks, and to partner on the development of regional parks that lie within or adjacent to municipalities. This effort for continuity extends to the provincial government and the neighboring regional districts and their respective parks and trails systems.

The Province's co-operative manner when entering into leases and tenures has allowed the Regional District to establish the excellent regional park system of today. Future partnerships in response to parkland opportunities will only improve the regional park system. Working with the local BC Rec Sites and Trails branch on recreational trails support will allow the recreational trail user groups to improve and enhance the recreational trails for the benefit of local PRRD citizens and visitors from outside the area.

BC Hydro owns land with access to water bodies that are currently used for recreation purposes by residents of the Regional District. These recreational opportunities exist today and are a valuable part of the parkland network in the Regional District. In the event that Site C Dam moves ahead, additional recreation opportunities may become available. It is recommended that the Regional District working with BC Hydro to review all potential sites as future regional parks.

Working co-operatively with the Province and industry partners will ensure the continued success of regional park system as well as assist in the PRRD efforts to support recreational trails within the PRRD.

It is and will continue to be important for the Regional District to work with the First Nations in the region to promote an understanding of First Nations culture through appropriate interpretation within the regional park system, and to find common goals in securing lands for regional parks and trails where the interests of the First Nations and the Regional District coincide.

There are endless opportunities for the Regional District to work with local environmental groups and organizations, such as Ducks Unlimited and the Nature Trust, on protecting and conserving special habitats and ecosystems, especially those lying within an existing regional park.

In order to support recreational trails within the region it is recommended that the work with the publishers of the various current recreation maps, such as Backroads Mapping and McEllhanney to ensure that they have all of the current and updated information on the regional parks.

The Regional District anticipates continuing to work with its existing and future community and user group partners in the planning and management of regional parks and supporting the recreational trails. This Master Plan suggests and recommends efforts to expand the current list of potential partnerships to a wider range of organizations in order to meet the vision, goals, and objectives of this Plan.





## 9.0 COSTS AND FINANCING

In order to implement the recommendations of this Master Plan, maintaining and enhancing the funding dedicated to regional parks and recreational trails support is required now and into the future. Enhanced operation and maintenance budget amounts will ensure that the existing parks are managed as desired by the users and residents of the PRRD. Access to an appropriate Capital Projects budget is equally important in order to implement the recommended park-specific capital improvements projects. Separate funding through the Reserve Fund for the expansion and acquisition of new regional parks and their future operation, maintenance, and improvements is also necessary. Finally, some sort of funding to establish the “Recreational Trail Support Grant” and program is essential to assist trail user groups in their development and promotion of the official trails.

This section of the Master Plan will highlight current funding for regional parks and will outline recommendations for future funding in regards to regional parks and the support of recreational trails with the aid of budget spreadsheets.

## 9.1 Financing and Funding Methods

Funding for the regional park system currently comes through the tax revenues authorized under supplementary Letters Patent which permits a maximum levy of \$0.066 per \$1,000 taxable value on improvements. In 2012 the tax rate was \$0.010 per \$1,000. The “Wants and Needs” survey results indicated that 84% of the survey respondents support a tax increase of some level to provide additional funds for the regional parks and recreational trail support budgets. Based on the 2014 assessment this Master Plan recommends an approximate tax rate allocation of \$0.019 to \$0.031 per \$1,000 of assessed value on improvements only over the 10 year life of the plan for the Regional Parks and Trails Support System. An example of what this would mean to the residential property owner is:

Property improvements (e.g., buildings) assessed at:	Over the 10 year life of the plan, the estimated annual cost to the property owner will be between:
\$150,000	\$2.80 to \$4.58
\$300,000	\$5.61 to \$9.17
\$500,000	\$9.35 to \$15.28

Rationale for increased taxes, as listed in Section 10 Recommendations, may include the following:

- Upgrading all existing regional parks to the same standards;
- Improving and expanding the regional parks and park system to encourage increased usage;
- Acquiring regional parks;
- Encouraging community partnerships such as those with the recreational trail user groups;
- Generally supporting a valuable tourism resource, the recreational trails in the region; and
- Making capital improvements for safety and enjoyment in the regional parks.

The budget required to continue the existing regional parks service and implement the recommendations of this Master Plan is covered in this section of the document. The capital and operational budgets are presented in Appendix G where a total operations and maintenance budget is estimated at approximately \$4,290,000 over the 10 year life of the plan. These budgets are intended only as a broad guideline for potential expenditures over the next 10 years. The numbers presented are not set or firm as costs will change and

unexpected opportunities will arise that will change the priorities of the regional parks and trails as well as the general PRRD budget priorities. All item costs are based on 2012 estimates and are for general budgeting purposes only; it is recommended that specific projects be subject to a detailed budget estimate prior to being undertaken.

The Regional District Board will make the decision to increase taxes based on rationale and public support compiled through this Master Plan process, as well as on any recommendations of improvements, operations, and staff increases presented within each future Park Management Plan. The Board is not limited by the recommendations of this plan or the proposed budget and its listed priorities. Every year a new budget is established by the Community Services department that identifies up-to-date budget numbers and appropriate priorities related to time, resources, and local wants and needs.

#### ***9.1.1 Regional Parks Capital and Major Purchases Reserve Fund***

This Master Plan recommends that the PRRD continue to develop **Bylaw 1974, 2011**, (Regional Park Capital and Major Purchases Reserve Fund) so as to provide the Regional District with a source of contingency funding to cover unexpected expenses, special one-time projects, and acquisition opportunities as they arise. It is recommended that the Regional District establish a policy to maintain \$100,000–\$250,000 in this fund for these purposes. It is important that the Regional Park Capital and Major Purchases Reserve Fund be maintained at as high a level as possible to accrue significant interest and to potentially be available as a reserve to cover unforeseen development costs or acquisition opportunities.

In the event that the regional park system has the opportunity to expand, the surplus amount may be reduced and other sources of funding will need to be investigated in order that the Fund continue to meet the needs of the regional park system. A potential source of money for this fund could be any surplus operational funds – i.e., any “leftovers” from the annual operational budget for regional parks.

Other supplementary sources of funds could include the following:

- **Commemorative Giving Program.** A small percentage of the cost of providing, installing, and maintaining memorial trees, benches, etc. could be added to the fee for this service, with the surplus designated to this fund. This Master Plan therefore recommends that the Regional District develop a program for accepting financial and in-kind donations towards regional park projects and infrastructure. The creation of an Endowment Fund specifically for this purpose could be created

that could facilitate the issuance of tax receipts for donations towards regional parks.

- **Fundraising.** This Master Plan recommends that the Regional District work with community groups and volunteers to encourage donations to fund specific projects such as trail and bridge construction within the regional parks.
- **Fee-for-service.** While fee-for-service is not considered desirable or practical from an operational perspective, the Regional District could install locked donation boxes at key, high-use parks for day-use or overnight camping fees to promote a sense of park value among users as well as to supplement revenues.

These possible funding sources would have to be studied and recommended by the Parks Committee and be approved by the PRRD Board of Directors on a case-by-case basis before being implemented.

## 9.2 Costs and Budgets

### 9.2.1 Regional Parks Operational Budget

The regional parks function will continue to be supported by an operational budget sufficient to ensure a satisfactory level of service and maintenance in the regional parks. The proposed budget will also include proposed amounts to accommodate the implementation of the recommendations relevant to the operational budget. The exact amounts necessary to operate and maintain the existing parks will vary depending on each park's unique needs for a safe and satisfactory visitor experience, specific park site conditions, and park-specific preferred development levels. Operating costs for the basic maintenance tasks are often underestimated and can negatively affect the expectations of the park users and the Regional District. Although the park contractors provide basic necessary services required for the operation of the regional parks, most of the costly and time-consuming maintenance responsibility falls onto the PRRD Public Works staff which may not have the necessary budget in place to perform these important tasks.

The operation and maintenance of the regional parks are separated into two main cost components:

1. **Park Maintenance Contracts** (the current contractors are individuals, groups, or partnerships and this is expected to continue) – current duties include grass mowing, weekly toilet maintenance (cleaning and restocking), garbage collection, and general weekly site clean-up; and

2. **Park Maintenance PRRD staff** – annual park inspections; general site maintenance; vandalism repair; pest management; toilet maintenance (pumping); general repairs for such items as signs, playgrounds, picnic tables, and fire pits; and invasive plant management.

The public consultation component of the Master Plan established that the majority of participants would like to see an improvement to the maintenance level of the existing regional parks. The Regional District pays the park contractors between: \$1,200 to \$3,300 per year for their seasonal (May to September) park maintenance duties \* (2013 rates). These fees are shown as increasing in the attached budget spreadsheets in order that the recommendations of this Master Plan can be met and new or additional tasks and expectation levels are required of the contractors. An increase to a range of \$3,500 to \$17,500 per existing park is expected, even for those regional parks which only have a basic level of facility development.

Beyond increased maintenance costs, additional Regional District staff and staff time—both from the Community Services Department and the Public Works Department—are recommended. It is anticipated that the additional staff requirements to successfully implement this plan will be the following:

- 1) one additional half-time public works summer staff person be added for the first two years after this plan is adopted; and
- 2) one full time position to be added to the Community Services Department for an initial two-year term.

The attached budget (Appendix G) shows the costs of these additional staff members needed to implement the recommendations of the Master Plan.

### **9.2.2 Regional Parks Capital Budget**

Capital improvement costs for regional parks have historically varied from as low of \$7,500 per year to as much as \$40,000 per year. A list of anticipated capital projects as detailed in Section 6: PARKS – PRIORITIES 2014-2023, is as follows and costs will vary from \$15,000 per year to \$125,000 per year depending on the project and the year:

#### **a) Blackfoot Regional Park**

- (i) Develop and create 10 new camping sites
- (ii) Install an on-site sani-dump station
- (iii) Develop a walking trail within the park
- (iv) Hire a summer park attendant

- (v) Acquire private land which is currently an actively used portion of the park
- b) Montney Centennial Regional Park**
  - (i) Design and construct additional camping area and sites including additional pit toilets
- c) Sundance Lake Regional Park**
  - (i) Expand park boundary
  - (ii) Install a fixed boat launch
- d) Spencer Tuck Regional Park**
  - (i) Permanent picnic shelter
  - (ii) Expand park boundary to include lands across road for overnight camping
- e) Minaker River Regional Park**
  - (i) Road access upgrade and improvement

Capital budgets for both existing and proposed parks based on the recommendations in this plan are presented in Appendix G, Operations and Capital Budget.

### 9.3 Recreational Trails Support Budget

In order to fulfill the goals of the PRRD and a recommendation of this Master Plan to support the development, construction, maintenance, and promotion of recreational trails within the region, funding must be in place and a budget established. This Master Plan recommends that the Regional District commit to a Recreational Trail Support Grant budget of \$75,000 annually within the budget to ensure that the intended recreational trail support be met. Additional recommendations of this Master Plan in regards to recreational trails support that require funding include a budget amount initially and a lesser amount annually to support the development of a regional recreational trail map by an outside group or organization such as the Tourism Boards.

The PRRD may also support recreational trails and user groups' efforts through small budget amounts for "in kind" activities, such as providing office equipment, staff time and/or advice, and administrative/office support.





## 10.0 RECOMMENDATIONS AND IMPLEMENTATION

This Regional Parks and Trails Master Plan will be implemented through annual decisions made by the Regional District on budget allocations and definition of work programs.

The following recommendations are statements of actions meant to guide decisions regarding regional parks and the support of regional trails. They are intended to generally support the overarching vision, goals, and objectives of this Master Plan.

The following are the PRRD Regional Park and Trails Master Plan recommendations and steps for strategic implementation. These recommendations were compiled from research, public input, and consultation with the Advisory Committee. They are listed in order of priority.

**1. Commit to the funding necessary to implement the Master Plan within the PRRD resources:**

- a) Increase the annual regional parks budget in order to implement all or some of the recommendations, such as:
  - (i) Communication projects including signage and mapping;
  - (ii) Recreational Trails Support Grant Program; and
  - (iii) Capital Improvement Projects.
- b) Establish a budget and timeline to ensure adequate staffing to implement the recommendations in phases. Staff increases could include:
  - (i) One additional half-time public works summer staff person to be added for the first two years after this plan is adopted; and
  - (ii) One full time position to be added to the Community Services Department for an initial two-year term.
- c) Consider alternate methods of funding for the regional park system such as Commemorative Giving, Fee-for-service, Endowment Fund, and Regional Park Acquisition Fund.

**2. Work to improve/upgrade the existing Regional Parks:**

- a) Complete a Park Management Plan for each of the regional parks;
- b) Establish methods to track park usage, concerns, and other notes of interest;
- c) Review and complete the suggested improvements listed in this Master Plan and the future recommendations that result from the individual Park Management Plans;
- d) Initiate the process to acquire the private land portion of Blackfoot Regional Park which is currently used for a small road to a campsite and an outhouse;
- e) Where applicable, encourage all future park development to take into consideration the PRRD Lakeshore Development Guidelines, especially those that protect water quality, preserve indigenous ecosystems, and minimize negative impacts from human activities; and
- f) Establish a set of standards for all park facilities and amenities in line with the best practices developed by the Province and other local governments.

**3. Encourage the Regional District Board to develop new policies or amend existing policies in order to enable the implementation of the recommendations:**

- a) Review existing policies and amend as necessary for the benefit of regional parks and recreational trail support;

- b) Update all existing pertinent PRRD Bylaws to reflect Master Plan recommendations;
  - c) Create an Emergency Plan for all regional parks;
  - d) Create a "Regional Parks Disposition" Policy to remove surplus lands from the regional park system. Ensure that the disposition process includes a public consultation component;
  - e) Create a "Regional Parks Acquisition" Policy which shall also include a public consultation component;
  - f) Establish a Regional Park Classification system to better manage, develop, and maintain the regional parks and their specific uses;
  - g) Update Bylaw No. 860, 1994, in the future, to reflect the regional parks that currently exist and to allow for varied park uses currently found in the existing regional parks;
  - h) Develop a separate Bylaw for the community parks currently listed within Bylaw 860;
  - i) Remove "Special Events" wording from Bylaw 860. Establish a stand-alone Bylaw to cover Special Events throughout the Regional District and not just in parks;
  - j) Amend existing Bylaws to include a statement that "where an agreement has been or may be made to pass control of a specific facility, area, or building within a regional park on to a community group or registered non-profit organization, that group may be given the authority to charge admission to their specific area";
  - k) Investigate the benefits of repealing Bylaw 591 to eliminate the Blackfoot Park Commission once a new regional parks Bylaw is in place; and
  - l) Amend the existing PRRD Park Use Bylaw No. 860, 1994 as necessary to continue to provide flexibility by allowing different regulations for different parks, where needed.
- 4. Develop a system of support for Recreational Trails in the PRRD:**
- a) Create partnerships with other municipalities, organizations, and groups where appropriate to support recreational trails within the region, such as:
    - (i) Supporting (financially as well as with staff time and resources) the local Tourism Boards and their development of a map detailing the recreational trails within the region;
  - b) Establish a "Recreational Trails Support Grant" system, similar in setup to the Grant in Aid program, to provide funding for local registered non-profit

organizations to obtain assistance and support for their recreational trail planning, development, and maintenance based on criteria established by the Regional Parks Committee; and

- c) Establish a library of information to assist Recreational Trail groups for the planning, development, and maintenance of their trails and compile data on Recreational Trails in the region that can be shared with others.

**5. Develop a communications project to promote and enhance pride in the Regional Park system and the Recreational Trails:**

- a) Ensure there is adequate budget to specifically improve the information distribution regarding the regional park system, such as their location, driving directions, suggested park uses, and individual park amenities;
- b) Incorporate regional parks and recreational trails support items and topics into the overall Regional District Communication Strategy;
- c) Develop an online map of the regional parks locations;
- d) Develop educational and interpretive information sheets on various topics relating to or promoting, among other things, the care and appreciation of regional parks and recreational trails, regional park stewardship, and safety concerns. This information is to be included on the Regional District website, in the newspapers, and in Regional District newsletters. (Topics may include regional park/recreational trail use etiquette, invasive weeds, historical site information, etc.);
- e) Create a signage strategy for the regional park system to improve regional park visibility (internally and externally), create an enjoyable and fun atmosphere, and enhance a positive image for the regional park system as well as to include signage that meets risk-management requirements.

**6. Work to expand the Regional Park system:**

- a) Expand Blackfoot Regional Park boundary to include area used by park but currently private land (NW corner of Lot 1, Sec 24, Twp 82, Rg 14 W6M Plan PGP 38297);
- b) This Master Plan recommends that the regional park system does not expand at this time. Best management practices suggest that it is necessary to complete the necessary improvements to the five existing regional parks prior to creating any new regional park in the regional district. In the future should there be a demand and interest from the public for more regional parks or should an advantageous opportunity arise to examine the potential for a new regional park, this Master Plan recommends that the Board strongly consider

choosing a site that would ensure a more equitable distribution of regional park assets for the residents of the regional district. An example of positive equitable distribution could be the establishment of a regional park in Area D close to Tumbler Ridge.

- c) Ensure that some of the parks are universally accessible;
- d) Ensure all OCPs include policies and opportunities to encourage the development of the regional park system and to support recreational trails; and
- e) In the event that Site C Dam moves ahead and additional recreation opportunities become available, it is recommended that the Regional District consult with BC Hydro on sites that may have potential for becoming regional parks.

**7. Implement the Master Plan with Climate Change mitigation measures in mind:**

- a) Continue to ensure efficient use of park vehicles, equipment, and maintenance scheduling as suggested in the OCP documents.

The PRRD has many excellent parks within its existing regional park system, some of which need improvements to keep up with the anticipated increase in use and demands on these parks. This Master Plan and the recommendations within it provide the Regional District with the opportunity to update and upgrade these important regional amenities for the use and benefit of residents, businesses, and visitors of the Regional District.