



Coastal bluffs looking east - Regional Park at Cape Roger Curtis

Visitor Use Management Plan

Regional Park at Cape Roger Curtis

May 2023

Regional Park at Cape Roger Curtis
VISITOR USE MANAGEMENT PLAN

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1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In May 2023, Metro Vancouver acquired 24 parcels of land (97 hectares) at Cape Roger Curtis on Bowen Island to establish a new regional park.

The regional park protects sensitive ecosystems, including regionally rare coastal bluffs, rocky headlands, and dry Douglas fir forests. It also provides opportunities for park visitors to connect with nature through day and overnight uses.

Through engagement with the public and agencies, a number of priorities for visitor use management have emerged, including protecting ecological values and avoiding impacts on transportation infrastructure.

A visitor use management plan has been developed to guide visitor management and ensure park and community resources are protected and resilient over the long term. The plan establishes desired conditions to guide land management as the park is planned, developed and ultimately opened to public access:

- I. Park access is sustainable. Car access to the park is limited to avoid impacts on the community, local roads, and the ferry system.
- II. Park visitors respect neighbouring properties, natural areas, and local amenities.
- III. The park's sensitive natural areas are protected and managed to avoid negative impacts from park visitors. Park visitors respect the regional park bylaw and regulations to protect park ecology.
- IV. Park visitors are prohibited from accessing habitats or ecosystems highly vulnerable to human impact.

The plan includes actions for each desired condition. Metro Vancouver will continue to work closely with Bowen Island Municipality, First Nations, and agencies to sustainably manage the park.

2.0 INTRODUCTION

Cape Roger Curtis is eight kilometres from Bowen Island's Snug Cove. It is within the territories of the Skwxwú7mesh Úxwumixw (Squamish Nation), xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam Indian Band) and zsalílwətaʔt (Tsleil-Waututh Nation). Metro Vancouver respectfully acknowledges the significance of Bowen Island and the Howe Sound for all three Nations, particularly the Skwxwú7mesh Úxwumixw (Squamish Nation).

This visitor use management plan is provided as part of the Bowen Island Municipal rezoning and official community plan (OCP) amendment process for the regional park at Cape Roger Curtis. Effective visitor management involves ongoing engagement, collaboration, and adaptive management. This is a living document to be reviewed periodically to manage potential impacts of the regional park and surrounding community through adaptive management.

Adaptive management is a systematic process for continually improving management policies and practices by learning from the outcomes of operational programs and actions. It guides the fine-tuning of

management actions in response to monitoring and assessment, advances in science and technology, changing regulatory regimes, public values and evaluations of effectiveness with an aim to reduce uncertainty over time.

The development of this plan was informed by regional park policy, best practices, research, and the *Visitor Use Management Framework*, which was developed by a council of land management agencies in the United States.

2.1 Background



Looking Southwest from lot 23, regional park at Cape Roger Curtis

The regional park is located on the southwest tip of Bowen Island at Cape Roger Curtis. The property includes an ecologically diverse dry coastal bluff waterfront.

The site was previously subdivided and prepared for residential development with a municipal road network, cleared development sites, trails and servicing.

The preliminary park program includes conservation and stewardship, trails, day-use amenities and low impact camping.

Through the public engagement process, some participants expressed concern with the potential impacts of park visitors to sensitive ecosystems, traffic, infrastructure, and municipal services. To address these concerns, this plan sets out

proactive and adaptive measures to manage park visitors, and to minimize impact on the regional park and the island as a whole. These measures will be implemented both prior to and during the phased opening of the regional park.

2.2 Visitor Use Management Plan Purpose

The purpose of this plan is to establish a framework for visitor management at the regional park at Cape Roger Curtis. Effective visitor management will support the following goals:

- Protect ecosystems and wildlife, especially regionally rare ecosystems: coastal bluffs, rocky headlands, and dry Douglas fir forests.
- Protect cultural resources and values in collaboration with Skwxwú7mesh Úxwumixw (Squamish Nation).
- Provide opportunities for people to connect with nature, including overnight opportunities, and to enjoy the unique views and landscapes of Cape Roger Curtis.
- Mitigate potential impacts of park visitation on the transportation network (local roads and BC Ferries Route).

- Mitigate potential impacts of increased visitation to Bowen Island's parks, beaches, and natural areas.
- To achieve the above goals with provisions for equity, diversity and inclusion. This includes identifying and mitigating visible and invisible barriers to access, which may include financial, transportation, physical accessibility, communication, or feelings of exclusion.

2.3 Relevant policies and legislation, planning documents

In spring 2023 Metro Vancouver provided an Implementation, Visitation, Operations and Access study, ecological overview and trip generation report to BIM as part of the rezoning / OCP amendment application. In addition to the Visitor Use Management Plan, Metro Vancouver is also completing a transportation impact assessment, transportation demand management study, emergency management overview, hydrological assessment, phasing strategy and park concept plan.

Transportation Plan 2018 - 2038 (2018): Bowen Island's transportation plan seeks, to have better transportation connections, choices, and health, through a number of actions, including a cross-Island multi-use path as a priority action. Other actions relevant to visitor management include: increased and improved sustainable transportation infrastructure (active and transit), exploring opportunities for alternative ferries and enhanced regional connections, incentives to promote the use of park & rides, exploring opportunities for alternatives to single-occupancy private vehicle use, managing parking, and multi-modal transportation integration.

Creating a Resilient Bowen Island: A Community Economic Development Plan for Our Sustainable Future (2021): an economic development plan for Bowen Island with the aspiration to create “a vibrant, resilient local economy that enhances social well-being while respecting local, regional and global ecological limits.” The section on responsible tourism provides guidance and strategies for balancing tourism with ecological integrity, island culture, and resident lifestyles. Relevant approaches include:

- Promoting tourism only for visits outside the peak tourist season.
- Encouraging longer, more immersive stays rather than day-trip visits. This approach includes focusing on learning and wellness.
- Encouraging low-impact tourism visits focused on hiking, cycling, health retreats, and so on, including promoting non-car visits to the island.

Bowen Island's *Official Community Plan (OCP, 2014)*: a document that provides a long-range vision for development and change on Bowen Island. The Natural Environment Section of this plan highlights the importance of preserving and protecting Bowen Island's natural environment, ecosystems and biodiversity. The section includes Objective 40 regarding the lands at Cape Roger Curtis:

- To encourage the retention of portions of Cape Roger Curtis in a natural state accessible to the public, including ecologically sensitive coastal bluffs, other sensitive ecosystems such as Arbutus and Douglas Fir Woodland, portions of the shoreline, archaeological features, viewpoints, and significant marine shorelines.

The Land Use Management section of the plan contains Objective 69, to continue to promote the public interest in the development of the Cape Roger Curtis lands. Under this objective, Policy 152 is that the Municipality continues to promote the public interest at Cape Roger Curtis by encouraging the development of the site to:

- conserve the majority of the coastline for ecosystem protection, but especially the south-facing ecologically sensitive and unique coastal bluff;
- where there are no adverse ecological impacts, develop public waterfront walking trails along the majority of the coastline, connecting to the cross-island greenway;
- protect environmentally sensitive areas and rare species;
- cluster homes and any other structures in any new development to reduce land disturbance, maximize green space and the opportunity for trails, and facilitate transportation alternatives; and
- minimize and mitigate any negative impacts from Cape Roger Curtis development on the adjacent neighbourhoods and on the island community as a whole.

Tourism Bowen's Responsible Tourism Plan (2023 in progress): a plan to balance tourism with community well-being on Bowen Island, including strategies for managing and improving Bowen Island's tourism ecosystem. Metro Vancouver will look for opportunities to collaborate with Tourism Bowen on visitor management.

Regional Parks Plan (2022): Metro Vancouver's management plan for the regional parks system. The plan guides work to protect natural areas and connect people to nature, progressing towards the vision of a resilient network of regional parks and greenways that continues to provide important climate, health and other benefits to park visitors and the wider region.

Regional Parks Natural Resource Management Framework (2020): a framework with strategic direction for managing natural resources in regional parks. It is guided by the principles of ecosystem-based management, adaptive management, the precautionary principle, and collaboration. The plan sets out strategies for long-term ecosystem integrity, resiliency, and overall health, including the conservation of diverse biological communities, while providing opportunities for people to connect with nature.

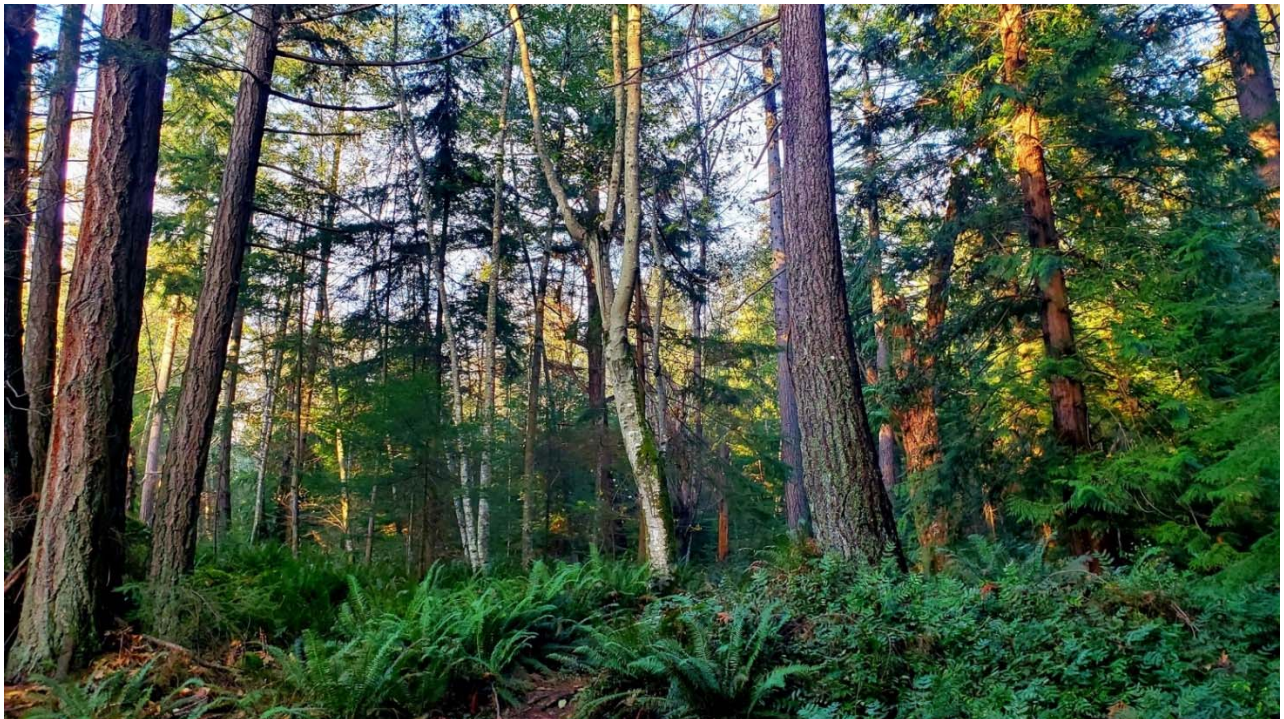


Public Open House at Bowen Island Community School

3.0 PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT PROCESS

The public engagement process has gathered insights, concerns, ideas, and values from the public, stakeholders, and agencies about the regional park at Cape Roger Curtis. Engagement opportunities have included public open houses, webinars, virtual technical focus groups, public feedback forms, letter and email submissions, and agency meetings.

Future engagement, through 2023, will inform the development of a park concept plan to guide land management, conservation and development over the long term. This engagement will involve the community, stakeholders, and agencies to shape the project's direction and design.



Forest trail, regional park at Cape Roger Curtis

4.0 PARK PROGRAM AND KEY CONCERNS

4.1 Preliminary Park Program

The regional park at Cape Roger Curtis encompasses about 700 metres of waterfront. Huszar Creek flows through the site. Along the shore, the coastal bluff plant communities are dominated by arbutus, shore pine, Douglas fir, and some 400-year-old maritime juniper. In recent years, there have been frequent sightings of orcas and humpback whales from this site.

A preliminary program for the regional park consists of conservation, habitat creation and restoration, and opportunities for tent camping, picnic areas, trails, waterfront views, interpretation and learning. Primary access for day-use and camping would be by shuttle or active transportation, with some car access provided for accessibility.

Park development will occur in three distinct phases, each taking two to three years, allowing for monitoring and review between construction phases. Full park development would happen over approximately seven years.

4.2 Key Concerns

Some participants identified concerns with potential impacts on the site's sensitive ecosystems, neighbouring areas, and the Island's transportation infrastructure through public and agency engagement. A summary of these concerns is listed below:

Within the regional park

- Potential impact of visitors to ecosystems and wildlife
- Potential for wildfires.
- Public safety in the coastal bluff environment.
- Potential crowding on trails and viewpoints

To the Island

- Concerns that the regional park will attract more visitors to the area, leading to more volume and safety concerns on local roads, especially White Sails Drive.
- Concerns that the parking lots would overflow outside the regional park, impacting use of roads and safety.
- Concerns that full parking lots might restrict access to the regional park.
- Potential impact of park visitors to the community and neighbourhood beaches.
- Potential expansion of use by visitors to nearby natural areas, specifically Fairy Fen and the Wild Coast Nature Refuge
- Potential impact of park visitor water use on groundwater resources.
- Added strain on ferry capacity, increasing wait times to get on and off Bowen Island.
- Potential added strain on emergency services (e.g. ambulances, police, fire).

- Potential worsening of existing crowding congestion at Snug Cove, including as people wait for ferries.

5.0 DESIRED CONDITIONS AND MANAGEMENT ACTIONS

The following desired conditions statements guide management actions and adaptive management measures.

- I. **Park access is sustainable. Car access to the park is limited, to reduce impacts to the community, local roads, and the ferry system.**
- II. **Park visitors respect neighbouring properties, natural areas, and local amenities.**
- III. **The park's sensitive natural areas are protected and managed to avoid negative impacts from park visitors. Park visitors respect regional park bylaws and regulations to protect park ecology.**
- IV. **Park visitors are prohibited from accessing habitats or ecosystems highly vulnerable to human impact.**

5.1 Management Actions

The tables below outline actions that will be implemented when the regional park at Cape Roger Curtis is opened to the public. Section 6 describes the monitoring and adaptive management measures that will be implemented in conjunction with the visitor management actions below. These actions will be reviewed and adjusted as needed.



Electric Bus, Iona Beach Regional Park

I. Park access is sustainable. Car access to the park is limited, to reduce impacts to the community, local roads, and the ferry system.

AREA	ACTIONS
Communications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Metro Vancouver will develop a communications strategy focused on encouraging alternative transportation to the regional park. • Metro Vancouver to collaborate with Bowen Island Municipality and other service providers on public communications.
Design	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Park facility design will include infrastructure to support people arriving by shuttle, especially those camping on-site. • Park facility design will include end-of-trip facilities for visitors arriving by bike. • Day-use parking lot capacity of 30-50 cars will limit the number of park visitors arriving by car at one time.
Shuttle	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Metro Vancouver will establish a park shuttle that will run daily, from Snug Cove (Crippen Regional Park) to the regional park at Cape Roger Curtis, from May to October. Park shuttle service will expand to weekends in shoulder seasons and beyond as visitation and capacity management warrants. • Metro Vancouver will provide a park orientation and shuttle pick-up location in Snug Cove within Crippen Regional Park. The facility will include washrooms and park information. • Information on park access, amenities, and etiquette will be shared with park visitors as part of the shuttle trip.

<hr/>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Metro Vancouver will determine the frequency, drop off and pick up locations as part of the transportation study that is currently underway. • Opportunities for additional regional pick-up locations, including transit hubs or other regional park sites, will be explored. • A detailed traffic study is underway, which will provide specific recommendations for implementation of the park shuttle service, and demand management tools.
<hr/> Reservations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Metro Vancouver will implement a reservation system for all types of overnight use. • Metro Vancouver will explore options for a day-use reservation system for vehicle visits during peak periods. • Metro Vancouver to ensure that the reservation system is compatible with principles of equity, inclusion, and universal access.
<hr/> Collaboration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Metro Vancouver will work with Bowen Island Municipality to seek out grant funding from other levels of government in order to advance the cross-island multi-use path (MUP) to connect the regional park at Cape Roger Curtis to Crippen Regional Park and Snug Cove. The MUP is identified in <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Metro Vancouver’s Regional Greenway Network - Transport 2050: Regional cycling network - BIMs Transportation Plan 2018-2038 - Metro 2050, the Regional Growth Strategy • Metro Vancouver will work with Bowen Island Municipality to fund key phases of the cross-island multi-use path (MUP) within the park. • Metro Vancouver will engage with BC Ferries, TransLink, and other transportation service providers to explore opportunities for improved transit access to the park. • Metro Vancouver will collaborate with Bowen Island Municipality to determine if road infrastructure, accessibility, and safety enhancements, such as intersection improvements or traffic calming measures, are needed and explore options to support realizing those improvements.
<hr/> Compliance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enforcement of day-use and camping reservations.



Park wayfinding signage, Crippen Regional Park

II. Park visitors respect neighbouring properties, natural areas, and local amenities.

AREA	ACTIONS
Communications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Metro Vancouver will coordinate with BIM, Bowen Island Conservancy, the Province and other agencies to determine how to represent (or omit) and communicate information on Fairy Fen Nature Reserve, Wild Coast Nature Refuge and local beaches on public Metro Vancouver maps or signage for the regional park.
Design	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Metro Vancouver will ensure that buffers, and barriers (if required) are established between the regional park and the surrounding land-uses, and that boundaries are clearly marked when needed. A buffer will be implemented between the regional park and the Wild Coast Nature Refuge. • Regional park boundaries will be clearly marked. Signage will clarify park bylaws, boundaries, areas suitable for public access and those that are off limits
Collaboration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaboration and adaptive management with adjacent land managers (e.g. Island Trust Land Conservancy, Bowen Island Conservancy, and the Province of BC) and neighbours.



Park visitor on a boardwalk, Crippen Regional Park

III. The park’s sensitive natural areas are protected and managed to avoid negative impacts from park visitors. Park visitors respect regional park bylaws and regulations to protect park ecology.

AREA	ACTIONS
Communications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a communications strategy for educating visitors on park bylaws, etiquette and safety, including pre-journey messages, signage and education. • Coordinate and collaborate with Tourism Bowen, BC Ferries, and tourism operators to ensure messaging is clear and accessible to a wide audience. • Develop clear messaging, as part of the communication strategy, on what facilities and activities are available at the regional park to manage visitor expectations. • Monitor high-traffic search engines and websites to correct misinformation on regional park use regulations and park access.
Regulations and Compliance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Metro Vancouver will enforce park bylaws to protect ecosystems and wildlife, and ensure a positive and safe visitor experience. • Bylaw education and enforcement will focus on visitors staying on trail, visitors only accessing the park during park open hours, no removal of vegetation or wildlife, and following all posted notices specific to the regional park. • Bylaws will be enforced by full-time uniformed staff and Metro Vancouver Regional Park Rangers. • Overnight camping will operate from May to October. Nightly quiet time hours will be enforced, in addition to no amplified music at any point. • No campfires will be permitted at campsites, or anywhere else, at the regional park.
Design	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Careful planning will ensure that people and facilities are directed away from fragile ecosystems. Designed and engineered

solutions, such as viewpoints, boardwalks, and barriers, will give visitors access to views while providing a safe visitor experience, and restricting access to sensitive ecological areas.

- Trails and roads will not be lit. Any lighting required for key park facilities will be kept minimal and designed following leading practices related to maintaining dark skies.
- Park facilities will be planned to minimize the impact on groundwater resources. This includes limiting hard surfaces and using low-flow/flush fixtures, water storage and pump-out facilities.

Park Operations

- The regional park will have dedicated year-round, full-time staff, and a camp host will monitor the campground overnight.
 - All park facilities will be maintained in a state of good repair
 - Develop a site-specific emergency response plan, including wildfire risk management, evacuation procedures, and other emergency procedures, wildfire management plan for the regional park. Dedicated wildfire response equipment will be located on-site.
 - Metro Vancouver's dedicated and highly trained emergency management, wildfire response, engineering, biologists, park rangers and other staff will support park management and emergency response.
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IV. Park visitors are prohibited from accessing habitats or ecosystems highly vulnerable to human impact.



Coastal Covenant Area, regional park at Cape Roger Curtis

AREA	ACTIONS
Communications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a communications and signage strategy for educating visitors about the prohibited areas. • Support key messages with visitor education through interpretive public programming and signage.
Design	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plan facilities to ensure people are directed away from habitats and ecosystems vulnerable to human impact. • Provide buffers and/or physical barriers (e.g. fences/guardrails) to prohibit access. • Ensure viewpoints or boardwalks give visitors high-quality experiences in appropriate areas.
Compliance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitor areas to understand if human impacts are occurring. • Provide a visitor education, regulations, and compliance program • Enforce the regional park bylaw, which prohibits off-trail use, by full time dedicated uniformed staff and regional park rangers

6.0 IMPLEMENT, MONITOR AND ADAPTIVE MANAGEMENT



*Education and Compliance, Delta South Surrey
Regional Greenway*

6.1 Implement Management Actions

Creating a visitor use management plan before the regional park at Cape Roger Curtis is developed means that actions outlined in this plan will inform site design, phasing, and operational plans. Implementation of park facilities will take place over three phases to allow for piloting and adaptive management, as outlined in the phasing plan for the park. Actions will be evaluated and revised based on site monitoring and adaptive management.

6.2 Monitoring Strategy and Adaptive Management

Metro Vancouver will monitor the park's ecological health, quality of park visitor experience, and work with BIM to ensure municipal infrastructure and services are not impacted.

Ongoing research and information gathering will include:

- **Ecological Data:** Metro Vancouver has ecological data for the park. Metro Vancouver will continue to collect information as the regional park is opened in phases to understand the impact of park visitors and adjust management actions as needed.
- **Number of Visits:** Metro Vancouver has a visitor counting program to measure daily park visitation at each regional park. Trail counters will be installed at the regional park to understand visit volume and patterns, and to see if adjustments are needed.
- **Visitor Survey:** Metro Vancouver conducts an in-park visitor survey program which gathers information about park visitors, the park visitor experience, and satisfaction with park facilities, typically on a 5-year basis. The regional park at Cape Roger Curtis will be included in the survey once it is opened to the public.
- **Visitor Education and Compliance:** Metro Vancouver will patrol the regional park to ensure park day-use and overnight facilities are being used as intended, recording instances of non-compliance. This may result in considering changes to the design or operations to better accommodate the intended public use of the regional park.
- **Collaboration:** Metro Vancouver will work with Bowen Island Municipality to monitor and address any impacts of the park on municipal infrastructure and services. Regional parks staff will coordinate regularly with local emergency services and explore opportunities for collaborative planning and training opportunities.

This work will identify key indicators for ecological data, number of visits, and visitor survey results to evaluate the effectiveness of visitor management actions as implemented. Following monitoring, staff will review the visitor use management plan and adjust as required.