



REGIONAL
DISTRICT
OF NANAIMO

707 Community Park Fuel Management Options

Please note: The original recommendation was varied by the Committee as follows:

That staff begin work on community outreach that will inform the development of a potential draft 2024 Community Resiliency Investment (CRI) grant application for a demonstration plot in the 707 Community Park.

RECOMMENDATIONS

That the 707 Community Park fuel management options report be received for information.

BACKGROUND

In response to concerns related to camp and cooking fires in the 707 Community Park, a Fuel Management Prescription (“the FMP”) was developed in 2022 (see Attachments 1, 2 and 3). The FMP identified the level of risk of wildfire and how to mitigate this risk through fuel management. The summary table below outlines the prescribed treatments from the 2022 FMP.

Treatment Unit	Treatment Unit Area (ha)	% of total park area (425.7ha)	Method	Treatment Details	Estimated Cost
1	9.84 ha	2.31%	Manual	Retain, 600 stems per hectare or 12% of current standing stems.	\$146,616
2	61.79 ha	14.51%	Mechanized	Prune branches to 5m above grade.	\$920,671
3	23.94 ha	5.62%	Mechanized	Remove dead and dying trees. Chip and haul away material.	\$356,706
Total	95.57 ha	22.45%			

On January 24th, 2023, the Board provided the following motion:

“It was moved and seconded that a report be provided with options for implementing the fuel management prescription in the 707 Community Park that are more reflective of the ecological goals of a park, including implications and opportunities for grant funding, project phasing and length of time implementing the project, implementing a pilot or demonstration project, different implementation options other than mechanical, and using Area B Community Parks funds instead of grant funds.”

Community feedback indicated that the FMP implementation does not meet the ecological goals of the park, and therefore different options for implementation were requested. Proposed options 1 through 3 are eligible for grant funding through the Community Resiliency Investment Program ("CRI"), as they meet the prescriptive objectives of the BC Wildfire Service Fuel Management Prescription Guidelines. CRI Grant funds are only available for fuel management activities which follow the CRI Fire Smart and Community Funding Supports and BC Wildfire Service Fuel Management Prescription Guidelines. These guidelines have specific, measurable objectives for the reduction of wildfire intensity in forested areas below a threshold of 2,000 kilowatt hours per meter. This threshold means that the heat given off by the wildfire is within a tolerable level for fire fighters to provide direct attack. Smaller grants may be available for restoration and planting such as the TD Friends of the Environment Grant or the 2 Billion Trees project.

Treatment options eligible for grant funding

1. Small Treatment Unit – To reduce the need for mechanical treatments, Treatment Units ("TUs") may be divided into smaller portions, treated over multiple years. Portions can be as small as one hectare, with portions any larger than five hectares limiting the ability to complete the prescribed tree removals without machinery. Reasonable timeframe to complete the prescription would be between three and ten years.
2. Pilot Plot - Evaluate the ecological impacts of the FMP by completing a pilot or test plot. A plot size of between one and five hectares, monitored over a minimum of five years would be required to sufficiently evaluate the ecological response to the prescribed treatment.
3. Demonstration Plot – Demonstration plots differ from a pilot plot in that it is targeted at education and improving public perception of fuel management. Demonstration blocks are highly visible, no larger than five hectares, and require a Fire Smart education plan. Details on demonstration plots eligible for CRI Funding may be found in Attachment 4.

Ecological Wildfire Management Plan

4. Ecological Wildfire Management Plan - Hire a qualified professional to evaluate the natural succession of 707 Community Park, including its susceptibility to wildfire, so that more precise information may be used to make decisions about fire management practices in the park. The plan would follow with recommendations on how to manage wildfire threat and risk in the park which prioritizes the ecological goals of the community. This option also allows for an understanding of the threat and risk to the community if no intervention is made, as well as time for new approaches and funding to become available to coastal communities concerned about both wildfire and the environment.

Proposed Project Phasing and implementation

Options above can be phased by length of time to complete and how much area is to be treated for each phase. To appropriately determine the location and size of treatment units, a pilot project or a demonstration plot, community engagement, input from POSAC EA B and staff will be required. A proposed timeframe is provided in the Financial Implications table below.

Phasing any project by treating the same portion multiple times over the course of several years is not eligible for funding through CRI and is not a feasible option for reducing wildfire risk. Return treatments to the same portion will cost considerably more than completing the treatment in one year. Additionally, it does impact the environment with repeated entry into the park, disturbance of soils, wildlife, and vegetation.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Proposed Operational Costing Options

The table below provides estimated timelines and costs that will be included in the 2024 Provisional Budget and Five-Year Financial Plan for the Electoral Area B Community Parks Service for implementation.

Option	Estimated Contractor/ Consulting cost	Recommended timeframe	Funding source	Estimated yearly cost	Total estimated cost
1. Small Treatment Units (100 hectares)	\$14,000/ha	10 Years	CRI Grant	\$140,000	\$1,400,000
2. Pilot Plot (5 hectares)	\$14,000/ha	5 years	CRI Grant	\$14,000	\$70,000
3. Demonstration Project (5 hectares)	\$16,700/ha	5 years	CRI Grant	\$16,700	\$83,500
4. Ecological Fire Management Plan	\$25,000 (report only)	1 year	RDN Funds	\$25,000	\$25,000

Post-treatment planting, for all scenarios, is estimated to cost \$3,000 per hectare to develop a planting plan, plant installation and establishment and completion of plant mortality surveys. This work should be completed within 1 year of treatment.

Current Operational costs

Trail brushing and maintenance to maintain access for fire emergency vehicles has been successful and ongoing for over 5 years. Parks Operations staff collaborate with BC Wildfire Service and the Gabriola Volunteer Fire Department to conduct inspections and maintenance of the trails. Current annual yearly cost to maintain these trails is \$2,600. In addition, the staffing costs associated with the administration of any of the four options provided above would be funded from existing operational budgets.

STRATEGIC PLAN ALIGNMENT

Environmental Stewardship - Protect and enhance the natural environment, including land, water, and air quality for future generations.

REVIEWED BY:

- B. Legg, Superintendent, Parks Operations
- A. Gore, Superintendent, Parks Research Planning and Development
- R. Daykin, Manager, Parks Services
- T. Moore, Chief Financial Officer
- T. Osborne, General Manager, Recreation and Parks Services
- D. Holmes, Chief Administrative Officer

ATTACHMENTS

1. RDN – 707 Community Park Fuel Management Prescription – April 19, 2022 – Signed and Sealed
2. 707 Community Park Operations and Trail Map – 2021
3. Community Parks Portfolio Electoral Area B Map – 2021
4. Excerpt from CRI FireSmart Community Funding and Supports – Demonstration Project