



REGIONAL
DISTRICT
OF NANAIMO

Rollo McClay Field Improvement Options

RECOMMENDATION

That the Rollo McClay Field improvement options report be received for information and the proposed field maintenance plan and related cost implications be included in the 2024 Budget review and discussions.

BACKGROUND

At the January 24, 2023, Board Meeting, the following motion was approved:

It was moved and seconded that staff report on options to improve the conditions of Rollo McClay fields.

Rollo McClay Community Park contains two softball fields that are primarily used by the Gabriola Softball Association. The fields are also used for programs, and other sports and recreational activities. The two ball diamonds in Rollo McClay are the only dedicated sports field facilities within RDN parks on Gabriola Island.

This report provides options for improving the quality and durability of the fields with the goal of allowing for an increase in field use while maintaining safe and playable fields.

Current Field Maintenance Plan

Current field maintenance activities and service levels are shown below in Table 1:

Table 1: Current Field Maintenance Standards

Maintenance Activities	Frequency
Mowing	25-30 cuts per year
Fertilizer application	Every 2 years
Solid tine aeration	Every 2 years
Top dressing	Every 2 years
Overseeding	Every 2 years

The upper diamond (named “Ducky”) has experienced a gradual decline in the quality of turf. An uneven ground surface and weed growth have created poor and unsafe conditions for sports activities.

Parks staff will be implementing fraise mowing for Ducky to improve the field surface and turf quality. Fraise mowing is a practice that removes the top layer of thatch and soil and leaves behind a relatively smooth surface. The remaining roots and nodes of the turf, combined with seeding and fertilizer applications, allow the turf to re-grow. This work will take place in May of 2023 and the Ducky diamond will be closed for up to 12 weeks while the

grass grows back. The initial plan for the fraise mowing was going to take place next year but through consultation with the Gabriola Softball Association and the Gabriola Recreation Society it was decided to start right away rather than waiting another year to improve the field.

Proposed Field Maintenance Plan

Increasing the frequency of maintenance activities to levels shown in Table 2 will improve the fields at Rollo McClay Community Park.

Table 2: Proposed Field Maintenance Standards

Maintenance Activities	Frequency
Mowing	50-60 cuts per year
Fertilizer application	3x
Solid tine aeration	Annual
Top dressing	Annual
Overseeding	Annual

The maintenance activities listed below will also contribute to improving and maintaining the fields to a higher standard and quality.

- Periodically, close fields for 2-4 weeks, or as required, to allow maintenance activities and field recovery to take place.
- The existing portable is planned to be removed in the fall 2023. Rehabilitation of the area, where the portable was positioned will create a small turf area for play.
- Conduct fraise mowing on an as-needed basis to support good turf management practices and field levelling.
- Monitor and evaluate field conditions and usage levels to determine if maintenance practices and frequency are meeting demand.

Other potential future field improvements include increasing irrigation frequency, improving field drainage, or a complete replacement of the entire fields. However, these projects would be disruptive and expensive and, if desired, would best be executed as part of a future capital project.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The current field maintenance budget is \$22,000 annually and \$15,000 every other year for aeration, topdressing, overseeding and fertilizing. For 2023, the field maintenance budget is \$37,000 and we have hired a contractor to initiate these turf care activities.

For 2024 and future years, it is proposed that the RDN establish an annual fields maintenance budget of \$52,000 for the improved maintenance of these 2 fields and a future practice field. Field operation costs are funded through the Southern Community Recreation Budget (participants are EA’s A, B, C and Lantzville) as part of the District 69 Sport Field Services Agreement with the City of Nanaimo.

Table 3: Proposed Annual Field Maintenance Costs

ITEM	Estimated Cost
Annual aeration, topdressing, fertilizing, and overseeding	\$22,000
Increased mowing frequency (50-60 cuts per year)	\$30,000
TOTAL ANNUAL COST	\$52,000

STRATEGIC PLAN ALIGNMENT

Growth Management - Provide effective regional land use planning and responsible asset management for both physical infrastructure and natural assets.

Social Wellbeing - Make the Region a safe and vibrant place for all, with a focus on children and families in programs and planning.

REVIEWED BY:

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