

TO: Committee of the Whole

FROM: Wendy Marshall
Manager of Parks Services

MEETING: January 8, 2019

SUBJECT: Grant Funding Applications for Benson Creek Falls Regional Park Infrastructure

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That an application for grant funding be submitted for the Benson Creek Falls Regional Park Infrastructure Project through the *ICIP - Community, Culture and Recreation Program*.
2. That the Board support the Benson Creek Falls Infrastructure Project and commit the Regional District's share of the project costs under the *ICIP - Community, Culture and Recreation Program* in the amount of \$146,685.
3. That an application for grant funding be submitted for the Benson Creek Falls Regional Park Infrastructure Project through the *ICET - Economic Infrastructure and Innovation Program*.
4. That the Board support the Benson Creek Falls Regional Park Infrastructure Program and commit the Regional District's share of the project costs under the *ICET - Economic Infrastructure and Innovation Program* in the amount of \$412,500.

SUMMARY

The Investing in Canada Infrastructure Program (ICIP) - Community, Culture and Recreation Program (CCR) is accepting applications for funding. The CCR Program will provide funding up to 73.33% for projects that improve access and quality of cultural, recreation and community spaces. Deadline for application is January 23, 2019 and construction must be completed within 5 to 6 years.

The Island Coastal Economic Trust's (ICET) Economic Infrastructure and Innovation Program enables communities to develop infrastructure required to support strategic economic development initiatives. Up to \$400,000 in non-repayable matching funding is available for Destination Trails that have the capacity to attract provincial, national or international visitors. The two stage application process can take up to one year and the stage one application deadline is February 22, 2019.

The Benson Creek Falls Regional Park (BCFRP) infrastructure project includes the construction of stairs and trails to the base of Ammonite Falls; trails into the ravine and a bridge over Benson Creek; and a parking lot and connecting trails on Weigles Road. Located in Electoral Area C – East Wellington/Pleasant Valley, Ammonite Falls is a popular attraction with many social media sites directing visitors to the park and surrounding trails on Crown land. With a new parking lot, a bridge and a safer descent to the falls, it is anticipated that visits to the park will increase.

The BCFRP Infrastructure project fits with the criteria for both the CCR and the ICET programs. The CCR program will provide \$403,315 of the \$550,000 total cost. Under the ICET program a further \$137,500 could be received and used towards the matching funds for the CCR program. Currently, \$400,000 is available in the preliminary 2019 Regional Parks Capital Budget and \$150,000 in the Regional Parks Operations Budget. If grant funding is received for this project, these funds would be available for other Regional Parks projects and acquisitions.

BACKGROUND

The ICIP cost shares infrastructure investments between the Federal, Provincial and local governments. The CCR will provide funding for projects that will improve citizens' access to and quality of cultural, recreation and community spaces and will provide up to 73.33% of project funding. Matching funding cannot be from other Federal or Provincial sources; therefore, Community Works Funds (CFW) cannot be used. The deadline for applications is January 23, 2019 with announcement to follow in the fall. Construction must be completed within 5 to 6 years.

The ICET's Economic Infrastructure and Innovation Program enables communities to develop infrastructure required to support strategic economic development initiatives. Up to \$400,000 in non-repayable matching funding is available based on the program's funding level for each Electoral Area. Destination Trails are a category under Tourism Funding. Destination Trails must have the capacity to attract provincial, national or international visitors as a stand-alone attraction. There is a two stage application process for funding over \$50,000. Stage 1 evaluates the project concepts, community support and potential benefits. Approved projects are invited to submit a Stage 2 application, within 6 months of Stage 1 approval. The full approval process can take from 4 months to 1 year and the project must be initiated within 6 months of approval. Matching funds can come from other government sources.

Benson Creek Falls Regional Park Infrastructure

On December 4, 2018, the Board approved moving ahead with the detailed design and planning for both a truss bridge across Benson Creek and a combination of stairs and trail to the base of Ammonite Falls (Attachment 1 and 2). Ammonite Falls, located in BCFRP, is a popular destination for both residents and tourists and the site is listed on several social media sites. The popularity of the park, and the trails on the adjacent Crown lands, has caused parking issues for residents on Jameson Road. To alleviate the situation, a concept plan for a new parking area on Weigles Road has been completed (Attachment 3). These projects were identified in the Management Plan as actions that would improve access and safety to the site. Once the bridge is in place, and the parking on Weigles Road expanded, the park will be accessible from two entry points. With a new bridge and safe access to the base of the falls, it is anticipated that visits to the park will increase.

The recreational amenities in BCFRP are a good fit for both the CCR program and the ICET funding. Staff have met with ICET staff who were very interested in this project based on the potential as a tourist destination and the proximity to Nanaimo.

The estimated cost of construction is \$235,000 for the bridge, \$135,000 for the descent to the falls and \$180,000 for a gravel parking lot. Total project cost is \$550,000.

Under the CCR program, matching funding cannot be from government sources however, funds from the ICET program could be used. Therefore, an application can be made for both programs. The CCR program could provide a grant of \$403,315. The matching funds would be \$146,685. Under the ICET program, the funding for Electoral Area C is up to 25% which could provide \$137,500. If the applications to both programs are successful, the total amount of grant funding received will be larger than if only one application is submitted. Also, the funding received from ICET can then be leveraged to receive more funding under CCR program.

ALTERNATIVES

1. That an application be submitted for the Benson Creek Falls Regional Park Infrastructure Project under the *ICIP - Community, Culture and Recreation Program* and the *Island Coastal Economic Trust Economic Infrastructure and Innovation Program* and that the Board commits to the Regional District's share of the project costs.
2. That an application be submitted for the Benson Creek Falls Regional Park Infrastructure Project under the *ICIP – Community, Culture and Recreation Program* and that the Board commits to the Regional District's share of the project costs.
3. That an application be submitted for the Benson Creek Falls Regional Park Infrastructure Project under the *Island Coastal Economic Trust Economic Infrastructure and Innovation Program* and that the Board commits to the Regional District's share of the project costs.
4. That no grant applications be submitted for the Benson Creek Falls Regional Park Infrastructure Project and that alternative direction be provided.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Benson Creek Falls Regional Park Infrastructure

The total estimated cost for the bridge, trail connections, access to the base of the falls and the parking lot is estimated at \$550,000, not including design and engineering. The 2019-2024 preliminary five-year Regional Parks Capital Budget includes \$400,000 in 2019 and \$970,000 in 2020 for this project. There is also \$150,000 in the preliminary 2019 Regional Parks Operations budget for the parking lot detailed design on Weigles Road. If the application to the CCR program is successful, \$403,315 in funding would be received. If ICET funding is received, another \$137,500 can be applied to this project. The various grant scenarios are as follows:

	CCR Grant	ICET Grant	Both Grants
Grant Funds	\$403,315	\$137,500	\$540,815
Matching Funds	\$146,685	\$412,500	\$ 9,185
Total	\$550,000	\$550,000	\$550,000

The cost to complete detailed design and engineering for the amenities is \$95,000 and can be covered by funds in the 2019 budget. Detailed design needs to be completed for the ICET Stage II application and therefore design will not be included in the grant funding requests.

If grant funding is not received, the construction of the BCFRP amenities will be funded from the Regional Parks Capital Budget. Receiving the grants will free up funds to be used on other Regional Park developments and acquisitions.

An estimated \$2,000 should be allocated annually for routine and long-term maintenance, funded by the Regional Parks Operations Budget. An expected \$14,300/year asset replacement cost should be included in the Regional Parks Capital Budget for a 50-year projected lifespan.

STRATEGIC PLAN IMPLICATIONS

Focus On Service And Organizational Excellence - We Recognize Community Mobility And Recreational Amenities As Core Services

Benson Creek Falls Regional Park is a popular recreational area and Ammonite Falls is a well-known site. By investing in the new infrastructure, the park will be better able to support visitors and provide a safe and rewarding experience.



W. Marshall
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December 18, 2018

Reviewed by:

- T. Osborne, General Manager, Recreation and Parks
- P. Carlyle, Chief Administrative Officer

Attachments

1. Descent to Ammonite Falls - Benson Creek Design
2. Benson Creek Falls Lower Bridge Design
3. Weigles Parking Design