
TO: Electoral Area E Parks and Open Space Advisory Committee **MEETING:** February 6, 2019

FROM: Kelsey Cramer
Parks Planner

SUBJECT: Area E – Parks and Open Spaces Advisory Committee Beach Access Inventory

RECOMMENDATION

1. That the 2017 Area E Beach Access Inventory be considered in the annual review of the 5-year Community Parks work plan for Nanoose Bay.

SUMMARY

In 2017, a sub-committee of the Area E Parks and Open Spaces Advisory Committee (POSAC) took on the task of inventorying beach accesses in Nanoose Bay. The purpose of the inventory was to provide a current status of the oceanfront provincial road allowances (under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure (MoTI)) and to consider suitability for signage or other improvements (e.g. trail development) that would facilitate public access to the beach. In Electoral Areas A, B, G and H, the RDN holds permits with the MoTI to allow for the installation of signs, benches, trails or other improvements on MoTI right of way, thereby assisting the community with improved public beach access. The MoTI does not develop road allowances for non-vehicular use, but they will entertain applications from local government to improve the sites for park and trail purposes under permit. Currently, the RDN does not hold any beach access permits in Area E.

The POSAC visited a number of sites in 2018 and considered options for signing and developing some sites in their 5-year work plan. The Committee determined that starting with signing some sites that already contain a footpath should be considered first. The 2019 budget contains \$1000 for sign costs. Staff time is required to assist with determining which sites to sign and conduct the sign installation.

BACKGROUND

There are over 60 oceanfront provincial road allowances in Nanoose Bay (see map, Attachment 1), which provide an opportunity for public access to the beach. The road allowances (typically undeveloped) are under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure (MoTI). Once a footpath or other form of access is in place, they are commonly referred to as “beach accesses.”

The Regional District of Nanaimo (RDN) does not own or manage roads or beach accesses. However, the RDN can apply to install and maintain signs, trails, benches, stairs, parking etc. at beach accesses under permit with MoTI. None of the public beach access locations in Nanoose Bay are currently signed, developed or maintained by the RDN, although several do contain

footpaths or other features to facilitate public access to the beach. Once the RDN holds a permit for development, the RDN is responsible to maintain the structure under permit. Electoral Areas A, B, G, and H all have beach accesses that have been improved under permit with MoTI. More information on beach accesses in general is included in Attachment 2.

At their February 22, 2017 meeting, POSAC members raised the topic of beach accesses and Parks Staff suggested that, as a first step, the Area E POSAC form a Sub-Committee as has been done in other RDN Electoral Areas to inventory, photograph and note development and signing ideas. Four volunteers stepped forward to self-organize and work as a Beach Access Sub-Committee of the Area E POSAC.

Over the summer of 2017, the Sub-Committee visited and inventoried all oceanfront beach accesses in Nanoose Bay (Attachment 3) and provided a status report to the POSAC at their September 13, 2017 meeting. Sites were ranked 1 thru 5:

- 1 = very suitable for simple development (e.g. trail, signs)
- 2 = suitable with constraints (e.g. stairs required)
- 3 = significant modifications required
- 4 = not suitable (e.g. cliff)
- 5 = already developed/partially developed

The Sub-Committee identified 12 sites (ranked 1) which they felt warranted a further review by the POSAC. A site visit was arranged for committee members and staff to view the 12 identified sites and to consider establishing priorities for development and/or signage.

Three sites were noted as possible beach access development projects (see Attachment 4):

- E-29: undeveloped road allowance that runs east-west at the end of Stewart Road east of Moorecroft Regional Park;
- E-53: undeveloped road allowance that runs east-west between 1675 and 1661 Claudet Road; and
- E-04: undeveloped road allowance at the end of Rowland Road adjacent to Rowland Road Community Park.

Other sites visited, as well as some sites ranked 5 could be considered for signage if they already have a footpath in place.

At their June 2018 meeting, the Committee reviewed the above sites in the context of the 5-year Community Park projects work plan. The POSAC determined that starting with a signage plan for sites that already contain a footpath should be considered first. In addition, E-06 (undeveloped road allowance at the end of Ted's Road), which has been noted on the 5-year work plan for several years as a beach access to improve, was determined to be of higher priority than E-29, E-53 or E-04.

Should the RDN pursue beach access permits in Nanoose Bay under approval of the MoTI, the permits would be non-exclusive and MoTI would remain the authority on the road allowance. The primary intent of the RDN's involvement in beach access signage or other improvements is to support the community by providing, enhancing and maintaining safe access to the beach.

Next Steps

The work of the Sub-Committee provides a snap shot of beach accesses in 2017 and offers information for the POSAC to consider in the 5-year project planning process that the POSAC undertakes annually.

To move forward in 2019 with the first beach access project, which is to develop a signage plan for some of the beach access locations with existing footpaths, the following next steps have been identified:

1. Engage with Snaw-Naw-As (Nanoose First Nation) regarding the POSAC's interest in signing and/or developing some beach accesses in Area E under MoTI permit.
2. Summarize candidate sites for sign installation per the 2017 inventory and priorities summary. Assess site opportunities and constraints and recommend whether and how to sign various sites. Consider starting with 3 to 5 locations – more signs could be added in the future.
3. Engage with the neighbours and adjoining properties and respond to input received.
4. Apply to MoTI for permits to sign beach accesses at select locations in Area E.
5. Install signs at selected beach accesses.
6. Consider future beach access projects in the 5-year work planning process.

ALTERNATIVES

1. That the 2017 Area E Beach Access Inventory be considered in the annual review of the 5-year Community Parks work plan for Nanoose Bay.
2. That the 2017 Area E Beach Access Inventory not be considered in the annual review of the 5-year Community Parks work plan for Nanoose Bay and alternative direction be provided.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

A budget of \$1000 has been allocated in the 2019 Area E Community Parks Budget to cover costs associated with sign installation. Staff time required for the planning, engagement and sign installation is estimated at 10 days.

STRATEGIC PLAN IMPLICATIONS

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

Focus On Relationships- We Look For Opportunities To Partner With Other Branches Of Government/Community Groups To Advance Our Region

Many public beach access opportunities exist in undeveloped road allowances within the RDN but they are not signed or do not contain safe trail access. By partnering with the Ministry of

Transportation and Infrastructure, the RDN can, under permit, install and maintain signs, trails or other improvements, that have been brought forward by the community to improve recreational access and mobility to the area's beaches.



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January 31, 2019

Reviewed by:

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

Attachments

1. Map of Area E Oceanfront Road Allowances
2. Primer on Water Accesses
3. Area E 2017 Beach Access Inventory
4. Area E 2017 Beach Access Priorities Summary