

## **A Primer on Water Accesses**

### **What are Water Accesses?**

1. Water accesses (also called beach accesses where seacoast is involved) are Provincial Crown land managed by the Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure (MoTI).
2. Water accesses (WAs) are undeveloped public road allowances that have not been developed for use by vehicles.
3. All members of the public are free to go on a WA in the same way as they are free to go onto any other public road.
4. MoTI does not develop WAs for non-vehicular use, e.g., for park and trail purposes. MoTI will entertain applications from local government, individuals and sometimes groups to develop WAs under permit for various types of development including trails, stairs, signage, benches, picnic tables, the creation of boat launches and boat launch parking areas, and the set up toilets (typically porta-potties with a wood surround). Development may require survey, engineering or archaeological expenses.

### **How Do Water Accesses Come About?**

1. The purpose of a WA is to provide the public with access to water, i.e. streams, rivers, lakes and the seacoast.
2. WAs are created by MoTI when land fronting water is subdivided and the opportunity to create public access to water arises.
3. In general, MoTI will try to designate a water access every 400 m. Sometimes, the MoTI Approving Officer will decide on a consolidated access rather than many small accesses, which is how Horne Lake Regional Park came about.
4. The Regional District of Nanaimo (RDN) does not determine WAs; contact the Nanaimo MoTI office for more detail on how WAs are designated.

### **When Does the RDN Gets Involved with Water Accesses?**

1. The RDN has no authority in regard to WAs. To make use of WAs for park or trail purposes, the RDN must seek a permit from MoTI. If approved by MoTI, such permits are non-exclusive and MoTI retains the right to cancel them or to develop the WA for vehicles.
2. Development of WAs by the RDN is initiated at the community park level. Park and Open Space Advisory Committees (POSACs) are in place for most electoral areas in the RDN. These Committees discuss WAs with park staff and typically identify which WAs warrant development and expenditure of community park funds in a given year. Each electoral area pays for its own WA development through its community park budget.
3. Most WAs in Electoral Areas B, H, A and E have been inventoried by the volunteer sub-committees of the POSACs (or Parks, Recreation and Culture Commission in Area A). Inventory updates and creation of priority lists help guide the selection of new improvements.
4. Like any expenditure of community park or trail funds, development of WAs requires accountability, consultation and formal RDN Board approval.

### **Contact Information**

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