



NECK POINT PARK MASTER PLAN UPDATE NOVEMBER 2010



DEPARTMENT OF PARKS, RECREATION & CULTURE

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Neck Point Park is a destination natural waterfront park for Nanaimo and the region. The park is recognised as an environmentally sensitive area and is well known in the community for its historic, scenic and natural features.

This updated plan revisits the 1999 Neck Point Park Master Plan, records what has been accomplished in the park over the last ten years, and looks forward into priorities for future park construction and management. It includes the 2009 acquisition area, addresses newly emerging management issues, accommodates increasing recreational use in the park, and strives to maintain the existing park vision and to protect park features for long term enjoyment.



TABLE OF CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.0 INTRODUCTION	1	4.0 PLAN RECOMMENDATIONS	29
1.1.....Plan Goals and Objectives		4.1.....Vegetation and Environmental Management	
1.2.....Plan Development Process		4.2.....Park Zoning	
1.3.....The Parks, Recreation and Culture Master Plan		4.3.....Vehicular Access and Parking	
1.4.....Public Input		4.4.....Visitor Management	
2.0 PARK FEATURES	5	4.5.....Trail Network	
2.1.....Location		4.6.....Community Partnerships	
2.2.....Existing Conditions and 1999 Master Plan Accomplishments		4.7.....Park Amenities	
2.3.....New Acquisition Area		5.0 PLAN IMPLEMENTATION	35
2.4.....Natural and Historic Features		5.1.....High Priority Actions	
2.5.....Cultural Features		5.2.....Project Oriented Actions	
2.6.....Recognition of Individuals		5.3.....On-going Actions	
2.7.....Topography and Surface Hydrology		APPENDIX A:	37
2.8.....Vegetation and Vegetation Management		Historical Summary of the Neck Point Area	
2.9.....Fauna		APPENDIX B:	39
2.10.....Environmental Sensitivity		Open House Survey input and comments	
2.11.....Existing Uses			
2.12.....Trail Counts			
2.13.....Emerging Issues			
3.0 THE MASTER PLAN	23		
3.1.....Vision for the Park			
3.2.....Master Plan Objectives			
3.3.....Summary of the Master Plan Concept Plan			
3.4.....Improvement Concept for the 2009 Acquisition Area			

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

Neck Point Park is a 36 acre waterfront park. The first 33 acres were added to the City of Nanaimo Park System in 1996 while the remaining 3 acres were acquired in 2009. The park is recognised as an environmentally sensitive area and is well known in the community for its historic, scenic and natural features.

An initial Neck Point Park Master Plan was developed in 1998 and adopted in 1999 as a guide for park construction and management. This plan was updated in 2010 to include the new acquisition area, address newly emerging management issues, to accommodate increasing recreational use in the park, and to protect park features for long term enjoyment.

1.1 PLAN GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The overall goal of the Neck Point Park Master Plan is to provide guidance for current and future land use planning as well as development and management of the park. To achieve this goal, a review of the key issues related to the site was conducted to determine:

- The overall character of this park and its role within the City parks and open space system.
- Environmental significance of the park within the City with consideration of what features should be protected and enhanced.
- Appropriate types of uses, facilities, and associated development to be accommodated at the site.

1.2 PLAN DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

The original Neck Point Park Master Plan was developed over two years with a significant amount of public input including a number of community surveys, an open house, and two public meetings. It was directed by a Neck Point Park Steering Committee as well as staff and consultant input.

The updated Master Plan was developed according to the following process:

Stage 1: Review of Existing Conditions

Updated base mapping—new acquisition area, existing trail network
GPS—November 2009

Review of the current Neck Point Park Master Plan to determine plan strengths and weaknesses

Review of current park use (trail counters, special event bookings, etc.)

Site preparation—the new acquisition area was made safe for the public—November 2009 through January 2010

Stage 2: Assess Priorities for Park Use and Improvements

Open house regarding the new acquisition area and review of the park over the last 10 years to determine park strengths and weaknesses – January 23rd, 2010

Public Survey regarding park strengths, weaknesses, and future directions—January and February, 2010

Stage 3: Plan Preparation

Assessment of survey results—March 2010

Draft plan prepared for Parks, Recreation and Culture Commission review—May 2010

Draft plan presented to public at an open house—September 18th, 2010

Plan presented to Parks, Recreation and Culture Commission for approval and forwarded on to City Council—November, 2010

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1.3 THE PARKS, RECREATION AND CULTURE MASTER PLAN

The Parks, Recreation and Culture Master Plan supplements the Official Community Plan and establishes a framework of goals and objectives to guide the acquisition and development of parks, greenways, and open spaces within the City of Nanaimo.

Identified spending priorities and park acquisition recommendations in the 2005 Parks, Recreation and Culture Master Plan in order of priority are:

- Waterfront and shoreline areas
- Lakes, streams and river courses
- Woodlands with extensive natural areas

Other requested facilities in the 2005 Parks Recreation and Culture Master Plan that are found in Neck Point Park are highlighted below.

Need for additional Facilities	
Facility	Percent
Waterfront Parks	43 %
Trails / Pathways	39 %
Arenas	33 %
Environmentally Sensitive	29 %
Natural / Passive	26 %
Off-Leash Dog	23 %
Neighbourhood Parks	22 %
Playgrounds / Water	16 %
Sport Courts	16 %
Swimming Pools	16 %
Art in Public Places	16 %
Community Centres	16 %
Museums	14 %

1.4 PUBLIC INPUT

The updated Neck Point Plan was prepared with public involvement to obtain valuable insight from park users and the general public into the needs, preferences, and values of special interest groups and the general public. Display materials at both Open Houses focused on the current park master plan, park use patterns and emerging trends, and improvement concepts for the new acquisition area and park entrance. Surveys and open house input were collected in the initial stages of the plan development process and were again available once the plan was drafted to give feedback on the draft plan.

Open House Surveys

Two open houses were held at Hammond Bay Elementary School Gymnasium to discuss the park and park improvements. The first open house was held on Saturday, 2010-JAN-23, from 10 a.m. – 4 p.m. with approximately 400 attendees. The second open house was held Saturday, 2010-SEPT-18 from 10 a.m. – 2 p.m. with approximately 300 attendees.

A survey was distributed to attendees at both open houses and was made available online and at recreation facilities to gauge public feedback regarding the future of Neck Point Park. Between the two open houses, almost 400 people responded to the surveys. The “hot” topics were different at each open house.

Highlights from the survey are presented below with a full summary of the survey results and comments presented in Appendix B at the back of this report. Survey questions are bolded below with the response following.

- **How often do you visit Neck Point Park?**

20%	Daily
40%	More than 1 time per week
31%	More than 1 time per month
8%	More than 1 time per year
1%	Never



- **If you currently use the park, which activities do you enjoy (# of respondents)?**

391	Walking
57	Running
19	Multi-use trail (skateboarding, cycling, rollerblading)
32	Special events and social gathering
165	On-leash dog walking
116	Off-leash dog walking (not permitted)
214	Beachcombing or beach access
81	Swimming
8	Scuba diving
233	Nature appreciation and interpretation
123	Picnicking
23	Other

- **Do you think the Vision for Neck Point Park as a “quiet waterfront park which offers opportunities to enjoy and appreciate natural site features through restoring and maintaining natural habitat values for present and future generations” is being achieved?** 96% responded yes, however, there was some concern over dogs off-leash in the park, bikes on the trails, and maintenance of natural trails. 99% of respondents supported maintaining the current vision as the future direction of the park.
- **As we look forward to the future, what do you think of increased park use?** Seems accepted by respondents (although some do feel it can be crowded already), but with a desire to balance and control special event use, people use, and environmental damage. Overall, a strong desire to maintain the park as a nature park, despite increasing use.
- **As we look forward to the future, what do you think of the current trail network and vegetation management?** Overall, very positive comments. Respondents express a desire to keep the trails natural and as narrow as possible, to keep park users on the trails, and to keep the trail system as accessible as

possible. Many comments also focused on increased vegetation management in the park—especially for invasive species reduction.

- **As we look forward to the future, what do you think about dogs in the park and creation of an off-leash area at Indian Beach? (only asked at first open house)** 33% of respondents were interested in a dog off-leash area at Neck Point. The remaining 67% were against it. Respondents were passionate in their views both ways--to give dogs a place to roam free and jeopardizing the natural features and safety and comforts of people in the park.
- **Three new dog off-leash parks have opened in Nanaimo as one year pilot projects with more anticipated in 2011. A portion of Colliery Dam (the upper dam) has become an off-leash area from 6 am-10 am each day. Dogs are required on-leash at all other times of the day. Would you support testing similar timed off-leash use at Neck Point Park? If yes, why? If not, why not? (only asked at second open house)** 55% of respondents supported exploring a timed off-leash dog park.
- **Are there other park improvements that you would like to see?** A number of ideas were expressed including desire for additional washroom facilities, addition of a picnic shelter or covered event space, and additional off-site trail links to the park.
- The majority of attendees at both events have noticed recent increases in park use and a lack of parking at peak times. Survey respondents were concerned about preserving the natural ecosystems of the park (both terrestrial and marine), were keen to improve and expand the current interpretive signage and interpretive walk programs, and were interested in increased and/or improved washroom facilities. Park accessibility was important to the majority of respondents as well as development of additional neighborhood trail connections to the park (via the Walley Creek trail system and the Fillinger Crescent area). Feelings were more mixed about special event bookings in the park and, although the majority of people did not mention any concern about special event use of the park (and enjoyed seeing weddings in the park), it was clear that social gatherings need to be balanced and limited to maintain the park vision.

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2.0 PARK FEATURES & USE

An important component of the plan update process involved acquiring a thorough knowledge of the physical, biological, and cultural features of the park as well as park development and use patterns over the last ten years. The Neck Point Park area has many links to Nanaimo's past, and the park provides abundant opportunities to interpret both natural and cultural heritage. The park's key features are highlighted on the accompanying Existing Conditions and Summary of Natural Features maps. A historical summary of the Neck Point area is provided in Appendix A. The following section of the plan describes these park features and uses.

2.1 LOCATION

Neck Point Park is over 36 acres of forested waterfront park, situated along the Hammond Bay shoreline in northern Nanaimo. The park is surrounded predominantly by the ocean along the north-western and north-eastern boundary, and borders properties owned by the Regional District, School District 68, and private residences.

2.2 EXISTING CONDITIONS AND 1999 MASTER PLAN ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Since first acquiring Neck Point Park in 1996 and developing the 1999 Master Plan, many of the objectives and elements identified in the original plan have been accomplished.

Accomplishments include:

- An extensive trail system has been established throughout Neck Point Park to allow safe recreational and special-use access. Stairs and boardwalks have been constructed in steep and sensitive areas along with accessible routes and multi-purpose trails.
- A parking area for 50 cars has also been established in accordance to the plan in a previously disturbed area of the park.

- A number of park amenities have been installed throughout the site including benches, picnic areas, and interpretive signage. A toilet was originally provided at the trailhead to the park, but due to ongoing vandalism, a concrete toilet has instead been provided in the parking area.
- Invasive plant removal campaigns have been carried out over the last ten years to various levels of success. Invasive plant reduction requires ongoing attention.
- Creation of a pond and natural water retention area near the parking lot.
- Trail connection to Shores Drive has been established over the Regional District property to provide optional park access and parking as well as to connect with Hammond Bay School. Long term use agreements are in place with the RDN for these trails.

Differences between the Master Plan and Current Park Development include:

- The pedestrian only trail near the wetland was not developed. Other trail concepts have been rerouted due to the preservation of natural features and ease of construction.
- Park boundaries have expanded including the 2009 acquisition area. Accordingly, the trail network has expanded and new viewing and opportunity areas have been established.
- 1996 Master Plan identified two toilet sites but only one has been built.
- Bike parking has not been established to date.
- Vegetation management is still a work in progress in this natural park.
- Dive amenities to still be installed

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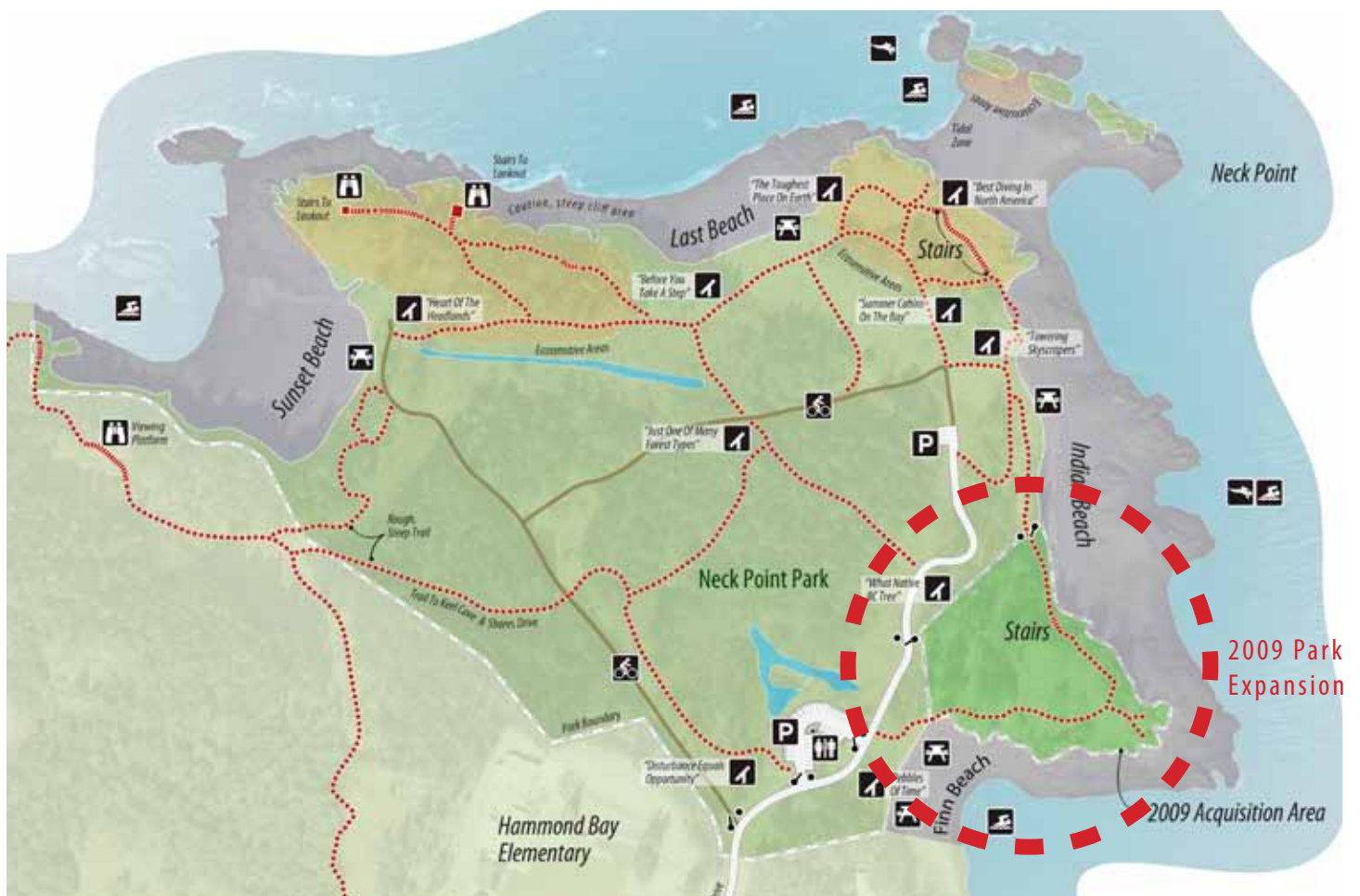


2.3 NEW ACQUISITION AREA

In June 2009, an additional 1.25 hectares (3.1 acres) of parkland was acquired by the City of Nanaimo for \$3.175 million.

Prior to making the site available for public use, site clean-up, building removal and public access upgrades were completed. A small residence was retained as a park caretaker facility.

New pedestrian trails, railings, stairs, and boathouse upgrades were completed prior to the official opening of this site for public access on December 17th, 2009.





2.4 NATURAL AND HISTORIC FEATURES

Beaches

The beaches at Neck Point Park primarily consist of gravel and cobble along the shoreline, extending to the upper beach areas that are composed of angular or rounded stones. Depending upon the orientation, these beaches are exposed to SE storms or NW winds. The beach areas are represented as the habitat code ‘GB’, in the Summary of Natural Features Map.

The beach intertidal areas are home to a variety of marine plants and animals. The shoreline areas situated between the upper beach areas and the upland grassy areas are characterized by continuous bands of dune grass (well developed at Finn beach) which stabilize soils and prevent erosion. The beach areas are identified as follows:

A. Finn Beach

In the early 1900’s Finnish people immigrated to work in Nanaimo’s coal mines. When the coal mines were idle during the summer, these settlers would fish and camp along the waterfront area now known as Finn Beach. Cedar driftwood was salvaged from the Neck Point beaches by one Finnish family, the Luomas, for use in finely crafted rowboats, constructed in their workshop on Shack Island. During the 1930’s and 1940’s, Japanese cod fishermen worked their boats out of Finn Bay, where a buyer would arrive daily to purchase the catch, deliver groceries and share local news.

B. Indian Beach

The beach area located on the east side of Neck Point is known as ‘Indian Beach’; named in reference to the First Nations community who resided near the Neck Point area prior to the 19th century.

C. Neck Point Spit

The spit area provides a dry bridge to islets off Neck Point during low tides. It is a popular departure site for scuba divers to access the boulder reefs at Neck Point.

D. Last Beach

In 1963, the owners of cabins situated along the south side of Hammond Bay were provided with the option to move their cabins to Neck Point to make way for permanent residences. Some of the cabins were barged over to the beach on the north side of Neck Point, which the cabin owners named Last Beach.

E. Sunset Beach

Named in reference to the spectacular sunsets one can witness due to its orientation towards the northwest. The first cabin at Sunset Beach was built in 1931 by Arthur Young, a well-known Commercial Street shoe retailer. Keel Cove, situated near Sunset beach, contains boulder reefs and wrecks popular for scuba divers.

F. Rocky Intertidal Beaches

The rocky intertidal areas are composed mainly of bedrock and some boulders, and are situated along the periphery of the headlands and islets. The intertidal areas are home to a rich diversity of marine life such as lichens, barnacles, mussels, rockweeds, algae, sea stars, crabs, anemones, snails, etc. The rocky intertidal areas are represented as the habitat code ‘RI’, in the Summary of Natural Features Map.

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G. Rocky Outcrops & Cliffs

The cliffs and outcrops occur at the edge of the rocky headlands and offshore islets along the marine shores. These areas are populated by small vegetation clumps or sparsely vegetated areas that include shrubby, herbaceous, moss and lichen species. These plant species are vulnerable to foot traffic because of their very fragile nature and slow recovery rate. Trails should therefore be diverted away from the rocky outcrops and cliff areas to protect these plant species and also to protect park users from vertical fall. The rocky outcrops and cliff areas are represented as the habitat code 'RO', in the Summary of Natural Features Map.

H. Rocky Herbaceous Wildflower Meadows

These wildflower meadow areas occur primarily on the rocky outer headlands and are designated predominantly by the Province as environmentally sensitive areas. The plant species found in these meadow areas include many low grasses and spring wildflower species, as well as uncommon species such as prickly pear cactus. The majority of these species are vulnerable to foot traffic because of their very fragile nature and slow recovery rate. Trails should therefore be managed carefully to limit disturbance to the plant species in these areas. The rocky herbaceous wildflower meadow areas are represented as the habitat code 'RH', in the Summary of Natural Features Map.

I. Wetlands

The park contains three partially drained and/or filled wetlands that collect runoff and/or seepage, and then drain by underground seepage to adjacent marine shorelines. The wetland areas are represented as the habitat code 'W', in the Summary of Natural Features Map.

11 Pond

In the mid-1970's, this wetland area was partially filled in the efforts of supporting residential development. This altered the water levels in the wetland producing a pond with standing year-round water and subsequent wetland vegetation. The pond now provides habitat for ducks, frogs, newts, and possibly amphibians that use the wetland area heavily in the summer.

12 Drained Wetland

In the mid-1970's, this wetland was ditched and drained which modified the year-round, saturated wetland into a seasonally saturated wet meadow and riparian habitat characterized by early successional wetland species.

13 Seasonal Marsh

This filled area still contains a small, seasonally saturated wetland area adjacent to the mature cottonwood stand.

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J. Forest Cover

The Park contains three major forest cover habitats which are characteristic of the Moist Maritime Coastal Douglas Fir biogeoclimatic zone, as follows:

J1 Douglas-fir - Arbutus - Garry Oak

This forest cover is characterized by the dominant vegetation cover of Douglas-fir and Arbutus that are established along with Garry Oak, Bitter Cherry and other plant species growing in these shallow dry soils. These habitats are close to their natural state, and are Provincially listed as environmentally sensitive areas. These habitats are located in the park along the central rocky knoll, the rocky ridge in the NE and NW, and the rocky slopes beyond the west boundary. The Douglas-fir/Arbutus/Garry Oak habitat areas are represented as the habitat code 'DAO', in the Summary of Natural features Map.

J2 Western Red Cedar - Grand Fir

This forest cover is characterized by the dominant vegetation cover of Red Cedar, Grand Fir, and Douglas-fir species growing in these deep and moist, nutrient-rich soils. Various deciduous trees, such as Red Alder, Maple and Willow species are established in the openings of the canopy. Disturbance to these habitats has occurred as a result of drainage and/or clearing activities, or from selective logging. These habitats are located in the central level areas of the park. The Western Red Cedar/Grand Fir habitat areas are represented as the habitat code 'RG', in Summary of Natural Features Map.

J3 Douglas-fir - Western Red Cedar

This forest cover is characterized by the dominant vegetation cover of large Douglas-fir and Western Red Cedar species growing on a sparse forest floor in relatively deep and moist soils. Disturbance to these habitats has occurred as a result of selective logging. These habitats are located along the gently sloping sites in the west side of the park. The Douglas-fir/Western Red Cedar habitat areas are represented as the habitat code 'DR', in the Summary of Natural Features Map.

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2.5 CULTURAL FEATURES

A. Snuneymuxw First Nations

The Snuneymuxw Coast Salish people fished and collected other food resources from spring to summer in the vicinity of Hammond Bay and Neck Point Park. The area was an important herring site and also rich in salmon, ling cod, and rock fish. Abundant clams, crabs, and oysters were harvested on area beaches and prawns were often fished off Horswell Channel.

Neck Point is said to have been an important lookout site for the Snuneymuxw during times of warfare. From the point, large ocean-going canoes approaching from the north could be seen many miles out from shore. A young man was posted on the point, and would run back to warn villagers at Departure Bay. Taylor Beach and Jack Point were also important lookout sites.

There is a large rock in the vicinity of Hammond Bay that, according to Snuneymuxw legend, has the ability to control the weather. The name for the man or location is Culuxw, meaning 'straight, high bluff' (The rock is the face of a man that was transformed to rock by Haals). As the story goes, if one puts water into one of Culuxw's eyes, the wind will blow towards the north. If water is put into the other eye the wind will blow southward, 'home' to Departure Bay.

B. Residential Development at Neck Point

A 1916 Geological Survey map shows two houses located at the north end of Indian Beach. Though not confirmed, they are thought to have belonged to the Louis Page family, who may have homesteaded on the property now known as Neck Point Park.

In 1917, Joseph E. Piper purchased 142 acres of waterfront property around Piper's Lagoon and Neck Point. Piper encouraged friends and acquaintances to build cabins along the beaches, charging each a nominal rent to help pay the taxes on the large property. By the

1930's, approximately fifteen cabins had been constructed along the waterfront at Finn Beach, Indian Beach, and Sunset Beach.

Around 1960, Dean Finlayson purchased approximately 356 acres at Neck Point and Piper's Lagoon. In the early 1970's it is understood that a large shallow pond and marsh in the northeast portion of the park were drained to create a riding ring and horse pasture. Also during the 1970's, it is understood that some of the larger trees were selectively logged, and all cottage owners were asked to leave the site. In 1994, Dean Finlayson sold Neck Point and an adjacent property to the west of the point to Lorne and Rosalind Michaels.

In December 1993, the Nanaimo City Council supported the issuance of a Preliminary Layout Approval (PLA) for a 450 unit residential development at Neck Point. Final development approval was never issued as the property was later subdivided and acquired as parkland. The entire park (including the new acquisition area) was at one time zoned RM-4, but will be zoned for park purposes now that it is being used as a City of Nanaimo park.

D. Neck Point Park Society

The Society was formed in December 1993 and played an instrumental role, over the following two and a half years, in having the area acquired as a park.

2.6 RECOGNITION OF INDIVIDUALS

The park currently recognises two individuals for their contributions. A park trail is named after Annie Clarke, a member of the Neck Point Park Society and advocate for the acquisition and preservation of Neck Point Park. In addition, the park access road is named after Deane Finlayson, former land owner and local developer.



2.7 TOPOGRAPHY AND SURFACE HYDROLOGY

The topography of the site is characterized as a series of four ridge and plateau areas, generally orientated from the northwest to the southeast. The ridges are formed by moderate to steep slopes with cliffs found mainly along the rocky headland between Last Beach and Sunset Beach. The plateau areas maintain wetland and riparian habitat at the lower elevations draining out to the ocean. The highest elevation on the site is 23 meters above sea level, and is located along the southwest corner of the property near the school site.

The park has a restricted rainfall catchment area with no defined watercourses. All drainage on and into the site is by surface runoff from bedrock outcrops or underground seepage through shallow soils over bedrock.

2.8 VEGETATION AND VEGETATION MANAGEMENT

In spring 1998, a background environmental inventory and assessment for Neck Point Park and adjoining marine areas was completed by J.C.Lee and Associates. The study utilized an assessment conducted by Madrone Consultants Ltd., in October 1993, of the area's vegetation cover, significant trees and wildlife trees. These studies provide an inventory and assessment of the area's significant natural environmental features only, and therefore does not include a detailed study of complex plant groups such as mosses, lichens, grasses and sedges.

This work was then followed up in 2000 by Katherine Dunster and Associates Environmental Consulting Ltd. They prepared a vegetation management plan with a summary of priority areas for site restoration, detailed prescriptions, planting plans, and cost estimates for each area. In May of 2000, the Neck Point Park Vegetation Management Plan (NPPVMP) was submitted to the City

of Nanaimo Parks, Recreation and Culture Department. The Plan was produced by a study team of biological consultants specializing in habitat and aquatic system biology, habitat restoration and other reclamation and restoration specialists.

The objective was to “develop an innovative and comprehensive management plan for Neck Point Park that would provide short, mid and long-term prescriptions for achieving the Park vision and the environmental objectives in the 1999 Neck Point Master Plan.”

This includes:

- Rejuvenating and reclaiming previously disturbed areas of the park.
- Recommendations for planting for restoration of aquatic and riparian habitat in wetland areas.
- Recommendations for planting for stabilization of marine shoreline areas.
- Recommendations for interpretive signage.
- Minimizing human impacts.

The scope of the 1999 Plan focuses on the original 33 acres of Neck Point Park and it speaks to initial priorities, maintenance directions, restoration strategies, and long-term maintenance practices. The plan identifies the restoration of disturbed sites as the highest priority for short term habitat restoration work. Reclamation treatment prescriptions are given for various parts of the park. Depending on the site, there is a lengthy native plant list including native bulbs, wild flowers, grasses, and understory plantings. Special details on planting techniques are also provided.

- Implementation began in May 2000 with the clean-up around a newly constructed parking lot, construction of a new pond, and restoration work near Finn Beach.
- In 2004, an effort was made to clear blackberry and broom from some of the disturbed areas north of the parking lot.



- In July 2009 a renewed focus on natural park management, initiated a more intense effort on controlling Himalayan Blackberry and other invasive plants by cutting.
- Park wardens have also offered assistance in blackberry removal near trails.

Although there is much work to be done, good progress has been made in broom eradication and blackberry is slower to recover. Replanting and reclamation will begin when significant success in dealing with the invasive species is achieved. Replanting with prescribed native deciduous trees on sites dominated with broom and blackberry is also an effective way to eliminate these shade-intolerant species over time. As reported in the (NPPVMP),

Vegetation Cover / Habitat Types

A total of 14 different habitat types were identified within and immediately adjacent to the Neck Point Park boundaries (Summary of Natural Features Map). These habitats are:

- dry upland and moist lowland mature forests,
- young early/mid seral woodlands recovering from historic disturbance,
- rocky terrestrial herbaceous grassy areas with numerous spring wildflowers,
- recently disturbed areas in various stages of primary and early secondary succession,
- remnant wetlands of several types,
- rocky seashore headlands and bluffs,
- marine beaches bordered by rich sub-tidal areas,

- The wide range of habitat biodiversity in the park results in a very wide variety of plant and animal biodiversity within the park. This high level of habitat and species biodiversity occurring within the 36-acre park is significant to the Nanaimo area.

2. Significant Trees

The park contains over 170 significant Landmark trees, as well as a number of Wildlife trees and stumps (see the Summary of Natural Features Map). Species identified as Landmark trees are summarized below. These species are:

- Arbutus
- Douglas-fir
- Bitter Cherry
- Garry Oak
- Black Cottonwood
- Grand Fir
- Crab-apple
- Western Red Cedar
- Dogwood
- Willow - various species

Wildlife trees left standing provide critical nesting and feeding habitat for many bird species, and also form key habitat for terrestrial stages of some salamanders. Decaying trees, which have fallen, are also utilized by a number of invertebrate and plant species.



3. Rare or Endangered Habitat Types

Four mature forest habitat types found within the park, which are undisturbed or minimally disturbed, are representative on a small scale within the Moist Maritime Coastal Douglas Fir sub-zone as follows:

a) Red-Listed:

- Douglas-fir - Arbutus - Western Red Cedar (DAR)
- Douglas-fir - Western Red Cedar (DR)
- Western Red Cedar - Grand Fir (RG)

b) Blue-Listed:

- Douglas-fir - Arbutus - Garry Oak (DAO)
- No Red/Blue-Listed plant species were found in this study, however, several species that are extremely uncommon locally, occur in very small numbers in the park and appear in need of protection (such as Prickly Pear Cactus, and Golden Bark Fern, etc.).

2.9 FAUNA

The Baseline Environmental Inventory and Assessment study provides an inventory and assessment of the area's significant natural environmental features only, and therefore does not include a detailed study of intertidal marine life and terrestrial invertebrates occurring in the area. The following is a summary of the vertebrate and invertebrate species that are known or likely to occur in the park.

Mammals

- A total of 21 terrestrial mammals species are likely to occur in the Park, amounting to roughly 80% of the species that occur in the Nanaimo area. A total of 6 marine mammal species may occur in the near shore waters.

Birds

- A total of 128 bird species are likely to occur in the park, including roughly 75+ terrestrial species, 30+ waterfowl species, and 20+ shorebird species. This variety of species amounts to approximately 61% of the species that regularly occur in the Nanaimo area, which reflects the richness and wide diversity of habitat types present in the park.

Fish

- Freshwater fish are absent from the park. Although marine intertidal and sub-tidal species are numerous in variety, they were only minimally inventoried in the study.

Reptiles and Amphibians

- At least 2 and possibly 4-5 reptile species are present in the park.
- A total of 8 amphibian species may occur in the park; 2 species were observed and the others are expected in suitable terrestrial habitat. Amphibians with aquatic larval stages have likely declined in abundance as a result of draining and filling of wetlands within the park.

Invertebrates

- A range of terrestrial invertebrates were observed incidentally and recorded although only minimally inventoried in the study. A wide range of marine invertebrates exists at the four different beach areas along with the spit.

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Rare or Endangered Species

I Mammals

No Red or Blue-Listed mammals are known to occur in the park, although the following may occur here in association with desirable habitat:

a) Red-Listed:

- Water shrew (may be associated with two wetland areas)
- Keen's long-eared moles

b) Blue-Listed:

- Townsend's big-eared bat

c) Yellow-Listed:

- Black-tailed deer

II Birds

A number of Red/Blue/Yellow-Listed bird species feed either regularly or occasionally within the park or in immediately adjacent waters as follows:

a) Red-Listed:

- Marbled murrelet (utilize near shore waters; may be found year-round)

• *b) Blue-Listed:*

- Hutton's vireo (known to breed within the park)
- Turkey vulture (visit the park periodically)
- Great blue heron (regularly feed and may breed within the park when Red Alders become suitable for nesting)

c) Yellow-Listed:

- Harlequin duck (feed year round within the park)
- Bald eagle (pair nesting annually on private property adjacent to the park, although Neck Point is their home and breeding territory)

2.10 ENVIRONMENTAL SENSITIVITY

1. Previous Disturbance

Many areas of the park are relatively undisturbed, whereas other areas have been heavily disturbed by activities such as road building, logging, land clearing, and residential or recreational uses. Disturbances to the park environment have resulted in habitats exhibiting varying stages of ecological succession and recovery, including the following:

- de-stabilized shoreline areas subject to erosion,
- early successional stands predominantly composed of native plant species which add habitat and species biodiversity to the park, although invasive exotic species may be present,
- invasive exotic 'weed' species which block the ecological succession of native plant species and have minimal biodiversity and wildlife use values,
- Remnant wetlands with reduced biodiversity and impaired ecological function.

2. Habitat Sensitivity to Disturbance

Two areas within the park are Provincially designated Environmentally Sensitive Areas (see Summary of Natural Features Map).

- the entire wooded (Douglas-fir - Arbutus - Garry Oak) rocky headland and coastal bluffs forming the NW corner of the park,
- the wooded headland area and neighbouring rocky terrestrial herbaceous wildflower meadows near the spit, forming the NE corner of the park.

All habitat types were assigned a rating of sensitivity to disturbance based upon their rarity, ecological age, biodiversity, fragility, and past disturbance. predominantly natural in its state, and dominated by native species with minor previous disturbance. They are either vulnerable to damage from expected human activities,



are provincially designated Environmentally Sensitive Areas or representative of rare habitat types (Red and Blue-listed). The sensitivity ratings and associated habitat types are summarized as follows:

a) High Sensitivity:

- Douglas-fir – Arbutus - Garry Oak
- Black Cottonwood
- Douglas-fir – Arbutus - Western Red Cedar
- Rocky Herbaceous Meadows
- Douglas-fir – Western Red Cedar
- Rocky Outcrops & Cliffs
- Western Red Cedar - Grand Fir
- Rocky Intertidal areas
- Alder (Willow) – Slough Sedge

b) Moderate Sensitivity:

- Disturbed: mainly regenerated with native species (e.g. alder, salmonberry),
- Open Grassy areas (previously disturbed),
- Recently disturbed, sometimes extensively, and are recovering by natural succession with predominantly native plant species,
- Valuable as early successional stage habitat for wildlife (contributing to biodiversity),
- Vulnerable to further disturbance.

c) Low Sensitivity:

- Disturbed: mainly invasive exotic species (e.g. broom, blackberry)
- extensively disturbed and are now dominated by invasive introduced plant species, predominantly broom/blackberry, with low biodiversity and habitat values for native wildlife species,

- in need of restoration to limit the spread of weeds to other habitat areas while improving biodiversity and habitat values for wildlife,
- logical and preferred areas to locate additional park facilities with minimal further loss of habitat.

2.11 EXISTING USES

Neck Point Park’s numerous beaches, extensive waterfront, and varied microclimates, serve as popular year-round destinations. Public use of the park includes:

Walking, Dog walking and Cycling

The existing trail routes at Neck Point Park provide park users with access to the various habitats and destination areas of the park. The popularity of these trails is evident with walking and dog walking activities noted as the most popular activities in the park. Bicycle use and universal access is possible on the main, flat trails.

Picnicking, Sunbathing and Social Gathering

The beach areas at Neck Point Park are an ideal location for sunbathing, picnicking and small outdoor gatherings such as weddings.

Nature Appreciation and Awareness

The diverse and abundant flora and fauna of Neck Point Park, attracts many visitors to the park interested in observing these species in their natural habitat. The park is currently one of the most popular sites in the Nanaimo area for bird watching and photography.

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Marine specimens have been collected from the waters off Neck Point for an organization called Seashore Unit, (co-sponsored by the University Women's Club of Nanaimo and the Pacific Biological Station), for use in their presentation of marine ecology to elementary school students.

Marine Uses

The various waterfront areas at Neck Point Park serve as popular areas for swimming, snorkelling, fishing, scuba diving and beachcombing. The sub-tidal area of Neck Point is rich in marine life, and thereby attractive to scuba divers as a popular diving location. Kayakers are also frequent users of the park and rocky waterfront areas are occasionally used for fishing from shore.

Outdoor Classroom

Hammond Bay School uses the park as an extension of the school yard. Large numbers of students can often be found running through the park or learning about natural sciences.

2.12 TRAIL COUNTS

In recent years, the Parks, Recreation and Culture Department has installed trail counters throughout Nanaimo's parks and trails to determine how much use certain routes are getting. Counters have been set up at Neck Point Park. These counts reflect general levels of use on the main trail. However, use levels seem to have increased even further since the addition of the new acquisition area in 2009. Future trail and car counts will determine this level of increase.

<i>2005 DAILY AVERAGE</i>	<i>2006 DAILY AVERAGE</i>	<i>2007 DAILY AVERAGE</i>	<i>2010 DAILY AVERAGE</i>
110 ~ (January)	70 ~ (January)	112 ~ (January)	142 (March)
167 ~ (February)	86 ~ (February)	112 ~ (February)	158 (April)
143 ~ (April)	94 ~ (March)	162 ~ (March)	177 (May)
87 ~ (September)	172 ~ (April)	200 ~ (April)	230 (June)
135 ~ (October)	194 ~ (May)	210 ~ (May)	242 (July)
105 ~ (November)	149 ~ (June)	224 ~ (June)	270 (August)
96 ~ (December)	128 ~ (July)	245 ~ (July)	245 (september)
	203 ~ (August)	222 ~ (August)	213 (October)
	207 ~ (September)	200 ~ (September)	
	168 ~ (October)	149 ~ (October)	
	126 ~ (November)	142 ~ (November)	
	101 ~ (December)	179 ~ (December)	



2.13 EMERGING ISSUES

Throughout the analysis process of this project, a number of new issues emerged with relevance to the future directions of the park.

Special Events

Given the fantastic setting, Neck Point has become a popular site to book for private and community events such as weddings, running challenges, dog walks, scuba diving, exercise classes, family picnics and celebrations of life. These special events can interrupt general park use and can also impact the level of maintenance expectations and general character of the park. Below are a summary of recent bookings:

- 2008: 21 weddings, 1 dog walk and private yoga lessons 2 days a week from June to August
- 2009: 14 weddings, 1 dog walk, private yoga lessons 2 days a week from June to August, 3 Dives, 1 Celebration of Life
- 2010 : 22 weddings, 2 dives, 1 dog walk, private yoga lessons, Underwater pumpkin carving, 2 other special events

Natural Areas Management

Over 70% of Nanaimo's park system is composed of natural parks and therefore require unique management. The Parks, Recreation and Culture Department will undertake further strategies to address the management of these unique ecosystems and important features in our community. The first of these strategies, an Urban Forest Management Strategy, was completed in 2010.

Dogs Off-Leash

In recent years, an increasing number of dogs can be seen in the park--both on and off leash. With increasing use and an increasing awareness of the potential impacts of dogs on wildlife and sensitive ecosystems, there is a growing desire from some members of the public to limit dog access and increase enforcement. There is also increasing pressure to provide more dog off-leash facilities throughout Nanaimo's parks, and many passionate dog owners have expressed interest in Neck Point as an off-leash opportunity site.

Aging Population and Active for Life

According to the 2005 Parks, Recreation and Culture Master Plan, the City's aging population has been perhaps the most stated planning trend over the past decade (pg.4). Along with the aging demographics, there is also an increasing awareness of how being active at all stages of life is essential to health and an increasing use of the park system and Neck Point Park trails by many seniors and extended living care homes. Many park users are also feeling a need to be active by giving back to the community and participating in volunteer programs.

Sport Fisheries and Fish Habitat Enhancement

The Department of Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO) is investigating the introduction of Pink Salmon in the waters off of Neck Point Park. This would create a new pink salmon sport fishery opportunity in the Neck Point and Piper Lagoon Area. DFO may also explore the potential for other salmon projects within the park property.

EXPLORE OUR PARKS AND TRAILS





3.0 THE MASTER PLAN

The following section outlines the vision, objectives, and 2010 Master Plan Concept developed for Neck Point Park.

3.1 VISION FOR THE PARK

A vision for Neck Point Park was established through the 1999 Neck Point Park Master Plan. This vision is still relevant and confirmed by the public today.

A quiet waterfront park which offers opportunities to enjoy and appreciate the unique natural attributes of the site through restoring and maintaining the natural habitat values for present and future generations.

3.2 MASTER PLAN OBJECTIVES

To achieve the vision for Neck Point Park, the following objectives should be met.

Natural Environment

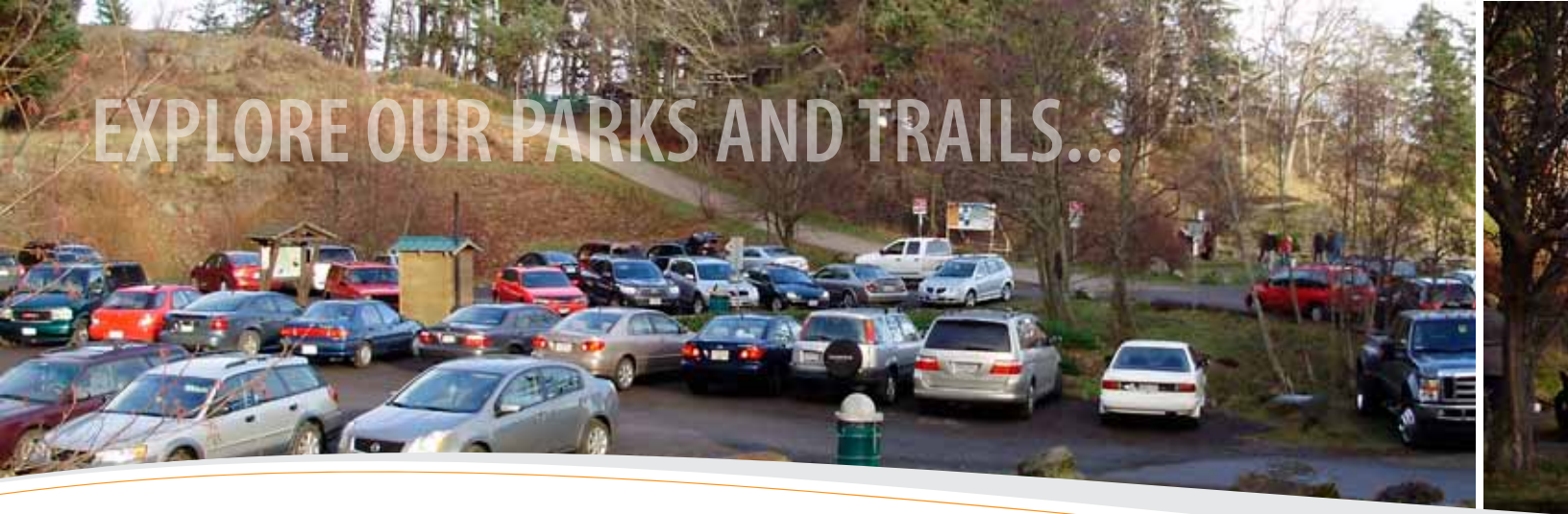
- Identify and protect environmentally sensitive areas and natural features from potential impacts related to park use and development.
- Rehabilitate disturbed terrestrial, wetland, and marine areas to conditions consistent with the undisturbed surroundings.
- Maintain sensitive wildlife and habitat corridors.
- Protect existing cultural features and visually sensitive views from potential impacts.
- Restrict development of facilities to disturbed areas where possible.

- Limit disturbance to the run-off and seepage drainage patterns on the site.
- Utilize permeable site surfaces, where possible, to allow infiltration and reduce surface run-off.

Recreational Opportunities

- Encourage recreational opportunities that are compatible and have a minimal impact on the park.
- Provide safe and enjoyable recreational opportunities for individuals with a range of ages and mobility levels.
- Develop trail routes that provide access to destination areas while restoring the natural environment.
- Develop new trails only where existing trails do not provide essential access.
- Enhance community opportunities for the appreciation, education and awareness of the natural and cultural features of the site.
- Provide vehicular access for emergency and maintenance services.
- Manage development of facilities and accesses to create complementary relationships among uses and retain adequate buffers between use areas

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3.3 SUMMARY OF THE MASTER PLAN CONCEPT

The Master Plan Concept aims to enhance public use and enjoyment of the park, in balance with protection of the site's unique attributes such as views, habitat areas and environmental resources.

Trail Network

The Trail Network is a key recreational asset, including trails of varying lengths and difficulty, providing a range of recreational opportunities and showcasing the diversity of natural wonders found in the park.

The main multi-purpose trail is soft surfaced and flat offering a barrier free access route suitable for bikes and wheelchairs. Some trails that connect into the multi-purpose route, such as the Headland Trail, Boathouse Lookout Trail and links to Keel Cove and Shores Drive, are not universally accessible. Stairs, boardwalks, and steeper sections can be found on these perimeter trails.

Built Facilities and Amenities

Facilities such as parking and washrooms are located to create complementary relationships amongst uses, make efficient use of infrastructure, and to minimize impacts of utilities, parking and vehicular access routes on recreational activities and the overall park environment. Where possible, they are located in previously disturbed areas.

Parking and Vehicular Access

A Parking Area for 50 vehicles and 2 busses is located in a disturbed area adjacent to the existing access road driveway, buffered from view by the retention of existing vegetation and supplemented by new plantings. Overflow parking is also available at the Hammond Bay School at peak times. In order to ensure parking is available for the public, special event groups are encouraged to car pool to the park site or park outside of the park and to walk to the site.

A "Special Use Accessible Parking" area is provided further into the park for 4 vehicles as well as a drop-off zone with access to the Boathouse Lookout via a gentle-grade trail.

By minimizing vehicles and parking in the park, safety, aesthetic and environmental concerns associated with intrusion of motorized vehicles into the park area are minimized.

Washrooms

One concrete washroom is located adjacent to the parking area. In the future, a second washroom may be constructed close to the secondary parking at Indian Beach.

Interpretive Information

A coordinated system of interpretive signage enhances enjoyment of the park and increases awareness about its many special natural and cultural features.

Site Orientation

An overall park map is located in the trailhead at the main parking lot to orient park users to the park. In addition, trail markers with directional and distance information are provided at key intersections throughout the park to direct park users throughout the trail network.



Special Event Areas

While permitted throughout the park, the three main special event areas are Finn Beach, the Boathouse, and the Seawall. These areas offer park views and are accessible, yet are slightly removed from the main trails to integrate events into the park.

3.4 IMPROVEMENT CONCEPT FOR THE 2009 ACQUISITION AREA

To achieve the vision and objectives for the Neck Point Park Plan, the following improvements are being proposed for the 2009 acquisition area.

Boathouse Lookout Trail

A trail will be established between Finn and Indian Beaches. This trail will skirt the shoreline and be composed of a soft surface and stairs (where required).

Greensward Meadow and Disturbed Area Restoration

This open area is planned as a space for nature appreciation, small social gatherings, and picnicking. A number of picnic tables will be installed for park use. Residence removal has left this area in a disturbed state, consequently, restoration plantings will focus on native herbaceous plants and grasses suitable for Garry Oak and Douglas Fir ecosystems. Planting of natives will help to ensure that invasive species will not establish in the area and will restore a healthy forest understory. Circulation routes through the meadow (Meadow Trail) will direct pedestrians and protect the re-establishing meadow vegetation. A planting plan and schematic diagram of the Greensward Meadow Planting is included in this document.

Meadow Trail

A secondary trail will be developed through the meadow to link the existing park trails to the Boathouse Lookout and Boathouse

Lookout trail. This trail will consist of soft surfacing and will be a universally accessible route. It will be designed to keep traffic on the trail with minimal impact to the meadow.

Boathouse Lookout

The remaining concrete slabs and structure provide a stunning lookout towards Piper's Lagoon Park and the Straight of Georgia. The site will serve as a lookout feature and may be used for special events such as wedding ceremonies. The boathouse also provides opportunities for storage facility for parks purposes or by other agencies.

Seawall

The concrete plaza below the boathouse offers unique connections to the shoreline and also provides a stunning lookout towards Piper's Lagoon Park and the Straight of Georgia. The site will serve as a lookout feature and may be used for special events and water access for offshore habitat enhancement projects and non motorized boats

Site Interpretation

Additional interpretive signage will be placed along the trail network to increase awareness about the natural and cultural history of the site.

Park Amenities

Park benches, garbage cans, and other site furniture amenities will be added along the trail system to add park comforts to users.

Significant Trees and Replanting

As many trees as possible were saved during site preparations in order to protect the site's environmental integrity and yet ensure park

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A scenic view of a park trail leading to a lake and mountains. The trail is paved and leads through a grassy area with some trees and a signpost. In the background, there is a large body of water and distant mountains under a blue sky.

user safety. A number of Garry Oaks, native Dogwoods, and fir trees remain on the site. New native trees will be planted in select areas to restore the area and provide succession for existing trees.

Park Caretaker

The remaining residence at Neck Point Park is the home of a park caretaker. The caretaker will open and close gates, monitor park usage and safety, serve as a park ambassador, and perform other tasks for the Parks, Recreation and Culture Department.

Special Event Drop-off Zone

Special events in the park will be allowed restricted special use access. No parking or vehicle access will be permitted in the restored Greensward Meadow, however, a pull-off area will be provided for the loading and unloading of vehicles and to ensure universal accessibility to this area. Restricted special use parking will be provided in the specified parking area only. Trolleys may be provided by Parks, Recreation and Culture to assist with gear transport for events and recreational park use.

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4.0 PLAN RECOMMENDATIONS

To achieve the vision and objectives for the Neck Point Park Plan, recommendations have been established specifically relating to a number of categories.

4.1 VEGETATION AND ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT

Management of the natural park environment, including vegetation and environmental factors, will determine the visual character and overall habitat values of the site. Disturbed areas within the park are of high priority for rehabilitation to eliminate invasive species, such as Himalayan Blackberry, Scotch Broom, and Tansy Ragwort. These invasive species obstruct ecological succession of desirable native species. Wildlife trees and snags established in the park and sensitive treed and meadow habitats will require careful management to provide suitable habitat for wildlife while safely accommodating park users. In addition, the sub-tidal area of the park requires special measures to manage the habitat for long-term enjoyment.

Upland Habitat Rehabilitation

1. Control or eradicate invasive species in disturbed areas where they are the dominant and/or only vegetation cover, followed by a re-vegetation with native pioneer species.
2. Facilitate the regeneration of native plant communities on the less disturbed areas by selectively removing competing invasive species followed by the planting of seeds obtained from soil seed banks and adjacent undisturbed areas.
3. Discourage the re-establishment of invasive species in areas further disturbed during the development of park facilities.

4. Introduce rare native species occurring in the park, such as fragile Prickly Pear Cactus and Golden Back Fern, to less travelled areas of terrestrial herbaceous meadows and rocky wooded headland to increase distribution within the park.
5. Review forest progression in areas dominated by pioneer species such as Alder. While succession is a natural progression, some management may be desired to maintain this ecosystem.
6. Carry out an inventory of the Garry Oaks on site and identify any evidence of younger Oaks and monitor newly planted Oaks.
7. Explore the practice of controlled burns to restore meadows in Garry Oak and upland areas.
8. Consider the removal of invasive species and small conifers, such as juvenile Douglas-firs, to restore Garry Oak habitat and remove light competition.

Shoreline Restoration

1. Control erosion of the backshore areas of Last Beach and Indian Beach by restoring continuous stands of dune grass from seeds possibly obtained from Finn Beach.

Wetland/Riparian Area Restoration

1. Restore the wetland/riparian area south of the rocky headland to an aquatic area with standing water year-round.
2. Create a new wetland boundary near the existing pond north of Finn Beach.

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Wildlife Tree Management

1. Locate activity areas beyond the immediate vicinity of the wildlife trees and snags to avoid potential hazards to park users and limit disturbance to these features.
2. Professionally assess wildlife trees and snags in heavily travelled areas on a scheduled basis to determine their hazard potential.
3. Pursue management options where wildlife trees and snags present a hazard to park users, by prohibiting access to the hazardous area, pruning, or if rotted out in the trunk, felling and leaving the tree in place to provide additional habitat.
4. Encourage tree species on site to develop a full life cycle and potentially contribute to the park habitat as wildlife trees or snags.

Sub-tidal area

1. Pursue dedication of the adjacent sub-tidal area as a marine park reserve.
2. Conduct an inventory and assessment of the sub-tidal marine environment and implement enhancement opportunities.

Coarse Woody Debris and Urban Fire Management

1. Debris from trees felled in the park should be removed from site rather than left in the bush to prevent fire hazards.
2. Forest fuel loads should be monitored to balance natural regeneration and fire hazards.

4.2 PARK ZONING

Work to rezone the 2009 park acquisition area from RM-4 to PRC1. This zone provides for the conservation and enjoyment of natural spaces within City parks. The zone will allow for recreational and educational uses that are compatible with the natural features within the park such as: boardwalks, trails, environmentally sensitive areas, and natural sanctuaries.

The original 33 acres of the park was already rezoned PRC 1 in 2009 so rezoning the remaining 3 acres to PRC 1 is consistent with the current zoning.

4.3 VISITOR MANAGEMENT

Neck Point Park offers many opportunities to accommodate recreational activities throughout the park's terrestrial and marine environments. Careful selection and integration of recreational activities at Neck Point Park are required to accommodate these uses compatibly while minimizing potential impacts.

Interpretive Programs

Continue to pursue potential interpretive programs that highlight the cultural heritage of the site, as identified to date, which include the following topics:

- First Nations
- Early Residents
- Department of National Defence: Canadian Navy

Continue to pursue potential interpretive themes which increase awareness of the natural environment of the park and expand on existing environmental awareness programs for topics such as the following:

- Habitat Types, Diversity, Ecological Succession and Rehabilitation
- Wildlife Trees and Snags
- Wind and Weather: Wind Pruning, Microclimate Conditions, Tides and Currents
- Marine Ecology
- Park Names and Notable Individuals



User Safety and Awareness

1. Continue to provide signage that informs the public on park rules and regulations as well as highlights potential hazards.
2. Provide suitable facilities, signage, and maintenance procedures to reduce impacts associated with litter, dog feces, and vandalism.
3. Consider installation of an emergency phone and liaise with Park Caretaker for emergencies.

Use Areas and Facilities

1. Define areas that permit recreational activities such as walking, swimming, picnicking, informal play, and social gathering.
2. Provide facilities and amenities, such as viewpoints, washrooms, picnic tables, benches, bicycle racks, and garbage receptacles to accommodate encouraged activities and enhance the user's park experience.
3. Provide barrier-free facilities such as benches and picnic tables, for individuals with mobility challenges.
4. Maintain public recreational use of adjacent Regional District of Nanaimo property.

Park Caretaker

1. Maintain a park caretaker in the existing residence to serve as the City's "ambassador" by being courteous and friendly to park users and by reflecting a positive attitude at all times.
2. The caretaker can also remove any marks and/or graffiti immediately, record and report all incidents of damage due to vandalism, breakage or storms, pick up litter from all trails and waterfront areas, open and close park gates and call Animal Control regarding problems with dogs in public park spaces. The caretaker can also update event notices and assist in car and trail counts.

Dogs off Leash

1. Given the park vision, environmental sensitivities, complex user groups, and current investment by the City into protecting the ecological and recreational integrity of this site, pursue the enforcement of dog on-leash rules within the park boundaries.
2. Continue to promote the establishment of additional dog-off-leash sites in North Nanaimo with and without ocean access.

4.4 PEDESTRIAN ACCESS

Trails that are managed and designed efficiently provide pleasant and safe links between destination areas while minimally impacting environmentally sensitive areas. Limiting access on specific trails is required to accommodate a variety of user groups compatibly. Trails that are identified as redundant or potentially impacting park features may require subsequent closure and rehabilitation.

All trails will be built and maintained to the standards and guidelines outlined in the 2007 City of Nanaimo Trail Implementation Plan. Where possible, universal access will be provided throughout the trail network, however, given the terrain of this site, it is not always possible.

Multi-Use Trails

- Accommodate universal access for pedestrians, bicyclists, emergency & maintenance vehicles, people with strollers, and individuals with mobility challenges.
- Trails are developed in accordance to the City of Nanaimo Urban Soft Surface Standard.

Nature Trails

- Restrict access to pedestrians only.
- Narrow trails over rough terrain that do not have universal accessibility.

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- Trails with boardwalks, railings, fences or vegetation barriers in sensitive habitat areas or dangerous cliff areas.
- Where possible, nature trails are looped into multi-purpose trails to allow circuits with accessible options.

Trail Closures

- Close redundant trails and restore to a natural condition in areas where they impact environmentally sensitive areas or alternative access routes are provided.
- Rehabilitate trail closure areas by closing the site and either allowing for natural regeneration, or improving soil conditions and allowing for improved natural regeneration, or improving soil conditions, intervening with re-vegetation and allowing for successful plant establishment to provide rapid results.

4.5 VEHICLE ACCESS AND PARKING

Safety and aesthetic concerns associated with the intrusion of motorized vehicles into the park are minimized through careful siting and design of the required access and parking facilities. Vehicle access through the park is permitted for emergency and maintenance services as well as special use groups where indicated.

Vehicle Access

1. Continue to limit vehicle access through the use of locked gates to the existing access driveway serving the parking area.
2. Continue to establish controlled access for emergency and maintenance vehicles along the multi-use trails.

Parking & Trailhead

1. Continue to limit parking to a 50 vehicle lot located in the disturbed area adjacent to the existing driveway.

2. Pursue an agreement with School District 68 to utilize the parking lot of Hammond Bay School for peak use.
3. Improve park trailhead to enhance the park entrance with a feeling of welcome and park information.

Restricted Special Use Vehicle Access and Parking

1. Continue to provide a parking area restricted to special use access for 4 vehicles. This area is accessed by key through the gate at the main parking area.
2. Provide an improved buffer to the parking area facilitated by the retention of existing vegetation, and possibly supplemented by new plantings.
3. Develop management strategies that identify the range of permitted special use access and the control required to manage the access.
4. Create a drop-off zone for special use and universal access near the meadow trail. This area will serve as an access point for special event use of the Boathouse Lookout and Seawall area, but is not a parking area. It is only a drop-off zone. Cars can park in the main parking area and special use parking areas.

4.6 COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

Strong enthusiasm exists in the community to participate in a range of park, open space, and environmental restoration initiatives. Clear direction from the Plan and the City of Nanaimo is critical to direct volunteer efforts and utilize limited financial resources as effectively as possible.

1. Pursue funding for Capital and ongoing operations with available resources, either through government, community organization, or community partnerships.



2. Pursue partners who may have potential interest in participating in habitat management and rehabilitation efforts or in increasing public interest in the park, such as:

- interested individuals, community organizations, and Volunteers in Parks,
- trusts such as the Friends of the Environment Foundation,
- non-government organizations,
- School District 68,
- Hammond Bay school staff and students,
- Regional District of Nanaimo,
- Province of B.C., Ministry of Environment, Lands and Parks, Tourism, etc.,
- Federal Department of Fisheries and Oceans,
- Vancouver Island University.

3. Develop a priority list that identifies potential park restoration and improvement projects, and includes appropriate locations, level of municipal financial support, and other resources available to facilitate public/private partnerships.

4. Determine appropriate venues for tributes or sponsorships to be accommodated at the park by individuals, organizations, or service clubs.

5. Consider the needs and opportunities for sponsorships under the existing Volunteers in Parks, and potential improvement sponsorships such as herbaceous meadow restoration, which incorporate an appropriate form of on-site acknowledgment.

6. Pursue the establishment of Volunteer in Parks Naturalists and Stewards to facilitate volunteer efforts by outlining municipal requirements and standards, levels of funding and support available, and the ongoing maintenance and operating costs associated with proposed projects.

7. Establish educational programs with potential partners interested in raising the awareness of the natural and cultural features of the park.

4.7 PARK AMENITIES

1. Install benches, garbage cans, picnic tables and other site furnishings at key locations along existing trails and in the new acquisition area to increase park user comforts.

2. Install amenities for scuba dive use

3. Provide trolleys for special event and recreational use

An aerial photograph of a coastal park. The top half of the image shows a lush green forested area with several winding trails. Below the forest is a rocky shoreline with a small beach area. The water is dark and calm. The text "EXPLORE OUR PARKS AND TRAILS..." is overlaid in white, bold, sans-serif font at the top left.

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5.0 PLAN IMPLEMENTATION

This section outlines the proposed plan recommendations in order of priority for implementation. Carrying out these actions is dependent upon both available resources and evolving priorities for parks throughout Nanaimo. These actions are outlined into the following level of priorities:

High Priority Actions - Actions requiring attention in the immediate future (0-5 years)

Project-Oriented Actions - Actions requiring a specific task

Ongoing Actions - actions requiring ongoing monitoring of specific tasks or projects

5.1 High Priority Actions

Vegetation and Environmental Management:

- Rehabilitate Greensward meadow in the 2009 acquisition area
- Work to replant trees in the new acquisition area that help to restore habitat and enhance succession
- Re-vegetate areas disturbed through site activities
- Introduce rare native species in the park (like Prickly Pear Cactus)

Park Zoning:

- Rezone the 2009 park acquisition area to PRC1.

Visitor Management:

- Develop guidelines for park bookings and special events
- Work with Animal Control to enforce dogs on-leash rules
- Install new kiosk at trailhead and wayfinding signage to and from Hammond Bay School

Park Interpretation:

- Upgrade and expand interpretive signage throughout the park
- Install interpretive and directional signage on the new acquisition area

Pedestrian Access:

- Construct Meadow trail through the Greensward Meadow
- Improve pedestrian access along Deane Finlayson Way and up to Hammond Bay school parking area

Vehicular Access and Parking:

- Work in partnership with School District 68 to open up the Hammond Bay School parking lot for park use at peak times
- Work with special event groups to plan for parking alternatives
- Develop special event/accessible drop-off zone near the Greensward Meadow and trail
- Naming of the park access road after Deane Finlayson
- Widen Deane Finlayson Way to allow for safe passage of two vehicles entering the park
- Develop a central trailhead in the parking lot area. This will include informational signage that is safely accessible, safe pedestrian routes, a picnic table, the washroom, and garbage and other park amenities in a central location with good sightlines
- Consider parking for busses in the parking area
- Consider moving gate adjacent to the parking area
- “Declutter” parking lot signage and strategically locate information and park regulation information
- Improve park entrance sign and kiosk

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Community Partnerships

- Work with the Department of Fisheries and Oceans to improve sport fishing in the waters off Neck Point and to improve fish habitat within the park
- Expand the park warden and park naturalist programs

Park Amenities:

- Add bike racks, benches, and other park site furnishings to the 2009 acquisition area and as required throughout the park
- consider improvements to existing washroom facilities and a second washroom facility in the park
- improve the seawall and boathouse lookout areas for special events and bookings
- Install amenities for scuba dive use
- Provide trolleys for special event and recreational use

5.2 Project Oriented Actions

Vegetation and Environmental Management

- In conjunction with Ministry of Environment and local fire officials, consider alternative forms of vegetation management as a means to restore Garry Oak meadows and habitat (such as controlled burns).
- Continue to identify hazard and wildlife trees and pursue required maintenance options
- Seek dedication of the sub-tidal area as a Marine Park Reserve
- Review forest succession

Visitor Management:

- Work to visually screen the caretaker residence and make it less intrusive into the park setting

Pedestrian Access:

- Work to increase trail connectivity between Neck Point Park and adjacent trails by extending the Walley Creek Trail system and securing trails on adjoining properties through development

Community Partnerships

- Work with the Department of Fisheries and Oceans to improve sport fishing in the waters off Neck Point and to improve fish habitat within the park
- Work with service clubs, grant agencies, and other agencies, such as VIU, on special environmental inventory and construction projects

5.3 Ongoing Actions

Vegetation and Environmental Management:

- Continue to eradicate invasive species as they regenerate
- Monitor shoreline erosion and replant as necessary
- Conduct fire fuel assessments on a regular basis

Visitor Management:

- Work with park caretaker to maintain and steward the park

Park Interpretation:

- Encourage Park Wardens and Naturalists to lead interpretive walks throughout the park
- Update and improve interpretive signage

Pedestrian Access:

- Monitor trail counts in various areas of the park
- Vehicular access and parking
- Re-vegetate buffer for parking area if required



APPENDIX A - HISTORICAL SUMMARY OF THE AREA

- DECEMBER 17TH 2009** Official opening of newly expanded park
- 2009** Acquisition of 3.1 acres of additional land for park (3.175 million by City of Nanaimo & Province of British Columbia)
- 1999** Park Master Plan adopted by Council, plan for implementation begins
- APRIL 1996** Neck Point property purchased for 8.5 million, by the City of Nanaimo and the Province of British Columbia
- DECEMBER 1993** City of Nanaimo issues a Preliminary Layout Approval for a multi-family development at Neck Point. The Neck Point Society was formed & encouraged the acquisition of Neck Point as parkland.
- CIRCA 1989** Dean Finlayson sold Neck Point and adjacent property
- 1975** Nanaimo city limits were expanded, now encompassing Neck Point
- EARLY TO MID 1970'S** NE pond and marsh were drained, while the wetland and swampy areas, west Finn Beach, were partially filled. Selective logging occurred and the existing gravel road was built.
- 1960'S AND 1970'S** Canadian Navy (D.N.D.) sets up optical instruments on Neck Point
- 1963** Cabins from Hammond Bay were moved or floated to Last Beach
- 1950'S AND 1960'S** Dean Finlayson purchased 356 acres around Neck Point and Pipers Lagoon
- 1930'S & 1940'S** Japanese cod fishermen worked their boats out of Finn Bay
- 1930'S** Approximately 15 summer cabins are located at Finn Bay, 'Indian Beach' and 'Sunset Beach'
- 1917** Joseph E. Piper purchased 142 acres of property around Piper's Lagoon and Neck Point
- 1916** Geological Survey shows 2 houses at the north end of 'Indian Beach'
- 1900'S** Finnish immigrants fished and camped at 'Finn Beach'
- LATE 1800'S / EARLY 1900'S** Louis Page homesteaded at Neck Point & owned property around Hammond Bay and Piper's Lagoon
- 1791** First European explorers arrive to coastal Vancouver Island
- PRIOR TO 1791** Coast Salish take up summer residence near Hammond Bay & Neck Point

EXPLORE OUR PARKS AND TRAILS...





APPENDIX B - SURVEY



NECK POINT PARK MASTER PLAN UPDATE,
NOVEMBER 2010



DEPARTMENT OF PARKS, RECREATION & CULTURE
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