

DATE: October 28, 2019**FILE:** 6130-20**TO:** Chair and Directors
Electoral Areas Services Committee**FROM:** Russell Dyson
Chief Administrative OfficerSupported by Russell Dyson
Chief Administrative Officer**R. Dyson****RE: Community Works Funds Request – Morrison Creek Conservation Area**

Purpose

The purpose of this report is to seek a decommitment of Community Works Funds (CWF) currently allocated to the completed Saratoga Beach Access Parks and Greenways capital project and further request that these funds be redirected towards capital works being planned for the Morrison Creek Conservation Area commencing in 2020.

Recommendations from the Chief Administrative Officer:

THAT the Board approve a decommitment of the remaining Area C Community Works Funds allocated to the Saratoga Beach Access project, in the amount of \$44,142.98;

AND FURTHER THAT \$44,142.98 of Area C Community Works Funds instead now be allocated to works planned for the Morrison Creek Conservation Area, within the Baynes Sound Area B and C Parks and Greenways service, function #621, commencing in 2020.

Executive Summary

This report seeks to decommit existing CWF and request CWF for the Morrison Creek Conservation Area.

- A balance of CWF in the amount of \$44,142.98 remains allocated for the Saratoga Beach Access capital works project in Area C. This project has been completed, so these funds can now be decommitted.
- For the 2020 fiscal year, parks is planning capital works in the recently purchased Morrison Creek Conservation Area in the amount of \$45,000 for the repair of a bridge that spans Morrison Creek.
- The decommitted CWF from the Saratoga Beach Access capital project will offset the requested CWF for capital works in the Morrison Creek Conservation Area (Area C).

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Background/Current Situation

In March of 2019, the Comox Valley Regional District (CVRD) and the Comox Valley Land Trust (CVLT) secured the purchase of a piece of property within the Morrison Creek headwaters. This ecologically significant property provides critical habitat for the federally and provincially endangered Western Brook Lamprey (known locally as the Morrison Creek Lamprey).

An agreement was signed between the CVRD and the CVLT to have the CVRD manage this property as a conservation area. Part of the agreement involved a commitment from the CVRD to produce a trail management plan that would be consistent with the goals of managing the space as a conservation area. In order to meet these goals, the CVRD is planning to close some of the existing trails within the land parcel and upgrade some others. Part of the proposed upgrades involves the repair of an existing bridge to accommodate recreational users.

The route on which the bridge lies was once the principle transportation artery for the Leung family, whose farm once supplied the early valley settlers with agricultural products. The bridge itself was built by Mr. Linton, a reputable road builder in the area.

The bridge was inspected on April 11, 2019 by Mike Hanson of Onsite Engineering. The inspection found the wood decking, wooden joists and wooden sills and wooden headwall to be rotten. The metal stringers, fabricated from rail-car flat decks, are sound. In order to ensure public safety, the rotten wooden decking was removed in September of 2019 and the bridge closed to public use, leaving the metal stringers exposed.

Planned bridge repairs would involve abutment and sill replacement and installation of new joists, decking and rails.

The replacement of the bridge will allow for the continued use of this historic route and access to the far side of Morrison Creek for park inspection and park monitoring purposes (see Appendix A map).

Policy Analysis

In accordance with the Rural Comox Valley Parks and Greenways Strategic Plan 2011-2030, parks designated as conservation areas are meant to protect ecologically sensitive habitat, however they do allow for limited access for people. The Morrison Creek trail plan proposes the closure of some existing trails while maintaining a small loop trail system.

Options

The following options are available to the committee:

1. Approve to decommit the Saratoga Beach Access CWF and approve the re-allocation of these funds to the Morrison Creek capital works project.
2. Approve to decommit the Saratoga Beach Access CWF and not approve the re-allocation of community works funds to the Morrison Creek capital works project.

Staff are recommending option 1 at this time.

Financial Factors

The costs to get the Morrison Creek Conservation Area safe and operational is approximately \$45,000 and includes the following:

- Engineering bridge design and support – approximately \$5,000.
- Bridge construction – approximately \$38,000.
- Miscellaneous park upgrades including signage – approximately \$2,000.

Staff are seeking CWF for this capital project. Reallocating CWF currently remaining towards the completed Saratoga Beach Access will fully offset this request.

If this reallocation is approved, this capital project, to be funded at least in part with CWF, will be reflected in the proposed 2020 – 2024 financial plan for the Baynes Sound, Area B and C Parks & Greenways service, function 621, for consideration and further approval.

Legal Factors

Not relevant.

Regional Growth Strategy Implications

This CWF request meets the following goals and objectives of the Regional Growth Strategy:

- Goal 2: Ecosystems, Natural Areas and Parks
 - Objective 2-D: Ensure access to parks, recreation areas.

Intergovernmental Factors

Not relevant.

Interdepartmental Involvement

Not relevant.

Citizen/Public Relations

The purchase of the Morrison Creek Conservation Area property was publicly supported by Lorna White, the adjacent property owner, who in many ways acts as the gatekeeper to the Morrison Creek park property. Lorna is an equestrian rider and the construction of the bridge would ensure she has the ability to continue to use the small loop trail system for recreation purposes.

Attachments: Appendix A – “Morrison Creek Conservation Area trail plan - Draft”

