

Parks & Open Spaces

RGS Goal:

Protect, steward and enhance the natural environment, ecological systems and regional biodiversity, while providing ongoing recreational opportunities.

Issue Overview

The Regional District of Central Okanagan is committed to conserving and enhancing the natural processes and biological diversity of our extraordinary region. The RGS provides an ideal opportunity to create a land use framework which positions regional conservation as an integral component of growth management.

Current Situation

The Central Okanagan's natural beauty derives from the stunning mix of forests, grasslands and lakes. Ecologically, the Okanagan is one of Canada's rarest and most threatened by development. Many of the ecosystems in the Central Okanagan are considered to be highly sensitive. The Central Okanagan also contains a high number of species and ecological communities that have been identified provincially as rare and endangered.

The Regional District of Central Okanagan Parks Services is responsible for looking after 29 Regional Parks and more than a dozen community and neighbourhood parks that together make up over 1,115 hectares of parkland. Over 850 hectares (76%) of our parks are classified either 'Conservation,' or 'Natural' which provide a higher level of protection for the ecosystems and species they contain. Demand for parks and recreation services continue to grow with our increasing population.

- » **Park expansion and crown land acquisitions:** We developed a Central Okanagan Regional Parks Legacy Program, which is a road map for the future acquisition of regional parkland from 2007 through 2017. The program identified three key areas for future parkland acquisitions - biogeoclimatic zone gaps, regional trails and greenways, and "regionally significant interests". As one component of the program, we are planning to acquire Crown Lands in several areas of our region. These areas include Black Knight Mountain (64-hectares), Hydraulic/McCulloch Lake (471-hectares), Trepanier Creek (6.5-hectares) and Spion Kop (311-hectares).
- » **New recreational pursuits and needs:** The Regional District, in coordination with its municipal partners, has completed new planning documents that address issues related to improved delivery and management of both newer recreational pursuits and our region's busy lakes. These include the "Kelowna and Area Mountain Bike Strategy" and the "Central Okanagan Major Lakes Recreation Marine Facilities Study".
- » **Agricultural lands:** Our agricultural lands remain an important part of our rural landscape and regional economy. They also provide habitat areas for birds and wildlife and help link and connect our region's natural areas. While our 2005 Agricultural Plan recognized these issues, protecting our farmlands from continued urban encroachment and development remains challenging, as do the conflicts at the urban-rural interface where our farmlands abut residential uses.