



What We Heard Engagement Summary Report

Project Name: Regional District of Nanaimo Recreation & Parks Master Plan: Gabriola, Mudge & DeCourcy Islands (Electoral Area B)

Date What We Heard Engagement Summary Report Drafted: May 29, 2025

Date What We Heard Engagement Summary Report Approved:

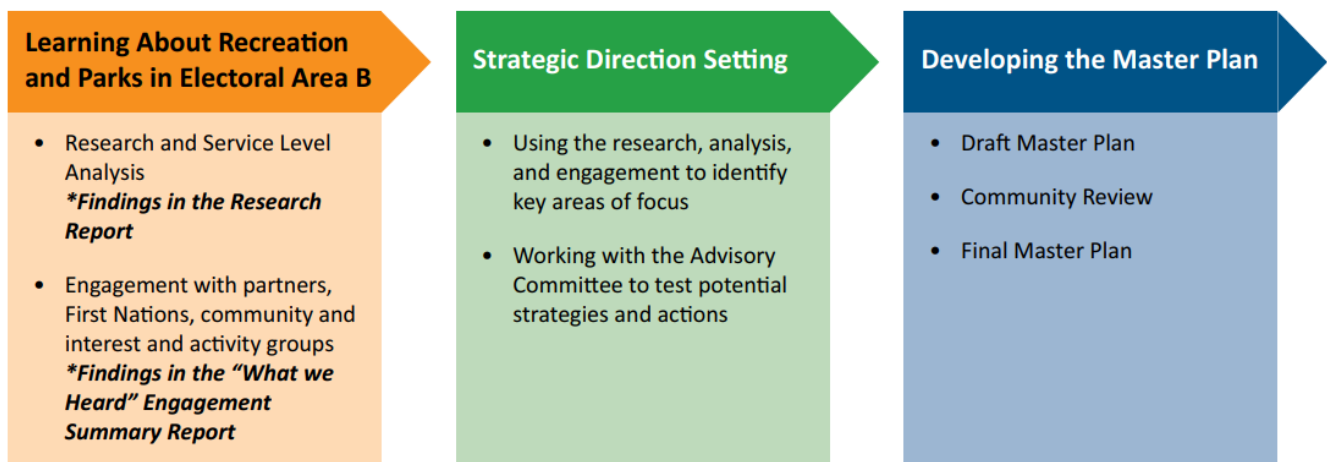
Overview of the Project

The Regional District of Nanaimo (RDN) has developed a draft Recreation and Parks Master plan that will support the provision of recreation services on Gabriola Island and parks services on Gabriola, Mudge and DeCourcy Islands over the next ten years. The draft Master Plan provides guidance across several aspects of recreation and parks services, including:

- Priorities for capital investment
- Programming and delivery approaches for recreation services on Gabriola Island
- Opportunities to optimize the management and service delivery practices
- The identification of future planning and policy priorities

The Master Plan additionally presented an opportunity to build on work previously undertaken by the many organizations involved in providing services and supporting planning within Electoral Area B.

The graphic below outlines the overall Master Plan process.



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Outline the Engagement Process

Stage 1 Engagement (Input Stage)

Comprehensive engagement was conducted during the initial phases of the project from June – November 2023 and focused on exploring the following key topics and subject matter:

- How the public and community organizations use recreation and parks facilities and spaces
- Changes in amenity demands and needs
- The barriers and challenges that exist and impact participation
- Values related to service provision
- Needs and expectations from the community
- Opportunities to further the Area's efforts regarding access and inclusivity

****The graphic to the right summarizes the Stage 1 engagement methods and participation.***

The above noted insights explored through engagement, along with other research conducted, provided a foundation of data from which the Master Plan was developed. Findings from the initial engagement and research are compiled into [two background reports](#). The project engagement was guided by an Engagement Plan developed at the outset of the project. The Plan identified levels of engagement (in alignment with IAP2), risks, and specific methods/tactics.

A Project Advisory Committee (PAC) was formed at the outset of the process to support the project team (consultants and RDN staff) by contributing to public engagement efforts and providing input at key stages of the planning process. The PAC included representatives from local organizations, service providers, Islands Trust and the Electoral Area Director. A representative from Snuneymuxw First Nation also participated in the initial stages of the committee's work and helped inform key aspects of the plan.

Stage 1 Engagement Methods and Responses Overview



**HOUSEHOLD SURVEY
(CODED ACCESS)**
285 responses



**HOUSEHOLD SURVEY
(OPEN ACCESS, NON-CODED
VERSION)**
231 responses



**COMMUNITY INTEREST
GROUP DISCUSSIONS
& DIALOGUE**
21 groups / activity interests
participated



**SOUNDING
BOARDS**
40 comments provided



OPEN HOUSE
Approximately 30 attendees



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Stage 2 Engagement (Review Phase)

The second stage of engagement focused around reviewing the draft Master Plan with the community. This second stage of engagement also presented the opportunity to share back key findings from the research and engagement.

The following methods and tools were used to facilitate the second stage of engagement:

- **Project webpage** (getinvolved.rdn.ca/ea-b-rpmp) – From April 30 – May 19, 2025, the webpage hosted the backgrounds reports, draft Master Plan, open house display panels and an online comment form.
- **Open house event** - Held on May 10 at the Gabriola Commons (11 a.m. - 1.30 p.m.), the event featured informational panels and printed copies of the draft master plan. Project team members were on-hand to, discuss the plan and respond to questions.
- **Comment form (online and in-person)** – The primary tool for collecting feedback on the draft Master Plan, the form was available both online and in paper format at the open house.

First Nations Involvement

Throughout the development of the Recreation and Parks Master Plan, the RDN reached out to representatives of Snuneymuxw First Nation to share information, invite input and explore opportunities for collaboration. A representative from the Nation was invited to participate on the Project Advisory Committee to help inform key stages of the planning process.

The Master Plan affirms the importance of continued dialogue with Snuneymuxw First Nation. The RDN is committed to ongoing collaboration through future planning and implementation of the Master Plan.

Awareness and Engagement Activities Undertaken

PAC Support

The PAC was critical to helping promote and support engagement. These efforts included:

- Helping place posters and signage
- Word of mouth
- Bringing forth perspectives from their respective organizations and interest groups

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Communication and Promotional Methods

The table below summarizes the communication and promotional methods used to generate project awareness and encourage participation in the engagement activities.

Methods	Description
Project website	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Established in Spring 2023 (getinvolved.rdn.ca/ea-b-rpmp) All project documents available through the website (background reports and draft Master Plan) Timeline regularly updated and refreshed Website was used to facilitate participation in the Resident Survey and newsletters were sent to those connected to the page
Resident Survey Invitation and Awareness Postcard	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As part of Stage 1 engagement, a postcard was inserted into the <i>Gabriola Sounder</i>, which is mailed to residents. Each postcard included a unique access code directing recipients to the project website to complete the Resident Survey. While the primary purpose of the postcard was to encourage participation in the survey, it also served to raise overall awareness of the Master Plan project in the community.
Signage and Poster	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Placed at locations around the study area to promote both stages of engagement (including Cox Community Park, North Road Horseshoe, 707 Community Park, Huxley Park, and Taylor Bay Road).
RDN News Release	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> News release developed and distributed during both stages of engagement.



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Examples of Posters and Outdoor Signage

RECREATION & PARKS
master plan
GABRIOLA, MUDGE & DECOURCY ISLANDS
(ELECTORAL AREA B)

Help Us Plan for the Next 10 Years of Recreation and Parks! We Want to Hear From You!

The Regional District of Nanaimo has developed a Draft Recreation and Parks Master Plan based on community input and an assessment of local needs and opportunities.

This plan will guide:

- Recreation services on Gabriola Island; and
- Community parks services on Gabriola, Mudge and Decourcy Islands.

We are seeking your input on the Draft Master Plan. Share your feedback on key strategies and actions that will shape the future of recreation and parks in your community.

How to Review and Share Your Input

Attend the Open House Event
Join us in person to review the Draft Master Plan and share your thoughts.

Where: Saturday, May 10, 2023
Time: 11 a.m. - 1:30 p.m.
Where: Gabriola Commons Timberframe
(675 North Road, Gabriola Island)

View the Draft Master Plan Materials
The Research Report and "What We Heard" Engagement Summary Report are available now.

The Draft Master Plan and open house materials (including the panels and an online version of the feedback form) will be available the week of May 5th.

Visit the website below or scan the QR code to view the Draft Master Plan materials and learn more about the project and to sign up for updates.

getinvolved.rdn.ca/ea-b-rpmp

RECREATION & PARKS
master plan
GABRIOLA, MUDGE & DECOURCY ISLANDS
(ELECTORAL AREA B)

HELP US PLAN FOR THE NEXT 10 YEARS OF RECREATION AND PARKS!

Scan the QR code below to access the survey and learn more about the project!

Complete your Resident Survey by September 29, 2023.

Paper copies are available by request by emailing eabrecparks@rdn.bc.ca

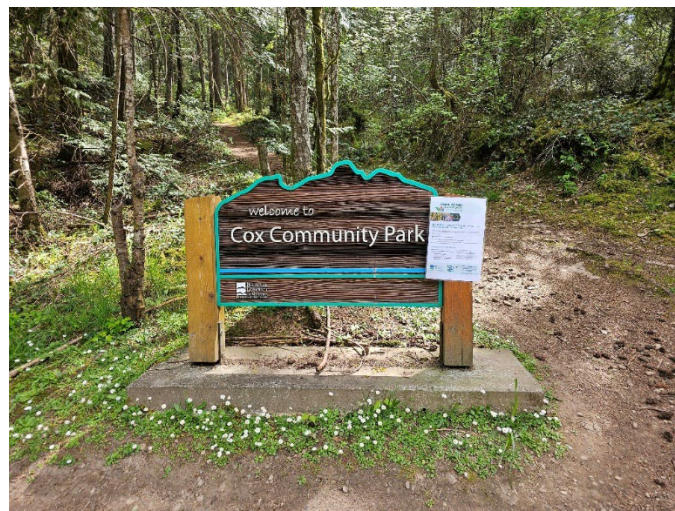
getinvolved.rdn.ca/ea-b-rpmp



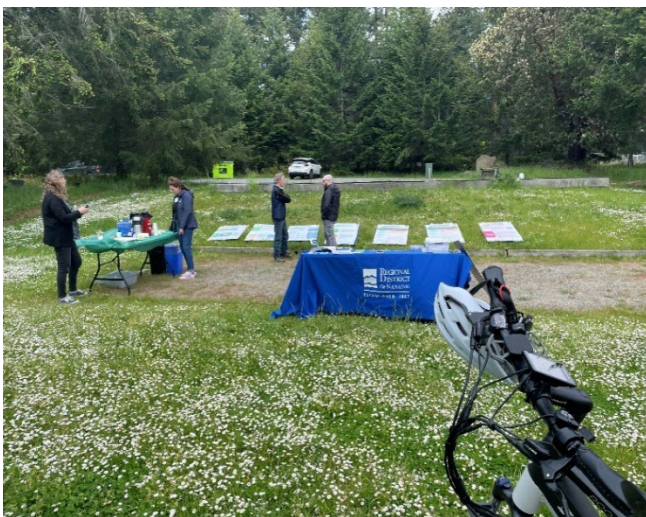
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Engagement Signage at Work



Open House Event Photos



What We Heard

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Stage 2 Engagement - What We Heard

Feedback from both online comment form submissions and in-person discussions are summarized below by theme. Verbatim comments submitted through the online comment form are provided in Appendix A. The majority of comments submitted reflected broader concerns and commentary on parks, trails and water access related issues and did not pertain specifically to Master Plan content. Many of the comments received reiterated many key issues that the Master Plan provides direction on.

Environmental Protection and Stewardship

- Concerns about motorized watercraft (jet skis, powerboats) in Taylor Bay—impact on shoreline, water quality, marine life and safety.
- Call for proactive restrictions (e.g., non-motor zones, speed limits, electric-only use).
- Call for better environmental protection and local involvement in conservation.
- Need to distinguish clearly between recreational parks and conservation areas in planning and governance.

Desire for Improved Access

- Discrepancy between the number of water access points claimed and actual usability—many are inaccessible or hazardous.
- Call for realistic assessment and improved infrastructure, especially for seniors and non-motorized craft users.
- Support for safe, connected trails and active transportation options.

Trails, Dogs, and Safety

- Frequent conflicts between off-leash dogs and other trail users, especially those with leashed or reactive dogs.
- Request for designated on-leash and off-leash areas and a clearer definition of “under control.”

Infrastructure and Recreation Needs

- Strong interest in a community pool, disc golf course, better trail amenities and affordable spaces for community use.

Active Transportation

- Desire for a safe, well-connected trail network for walking and cycling.
- Concerns about road safety (narrow roads, high speeds, poor visibility) impeding active transportation.



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Mudge Island Equity

- Concern over the lack of parks, trails and water access on Mudge Island. Residents feel overlooked.
- Desire for land acquisition to meet basic community needs.
- Willingness of Mudge residents to self-manage but asked for support and funding when needed.

Governance and Community Involvement

- Criticism of top-down planning processes that exclude local knowledge and lived experience.
- Desire for greater transparency, inclusion and community-based decision-making—especially for nature reserves like Coats Marsh.
- Frustration with groups perceived as monopolizing conservation dialogue without full community representation.

Summary of Who We Heard From

Participation in the Stage 2 (draft Master Plan review) is summarized as follows:

- 20 people attended the open house event
- 10 individuals submitted comment forms
- 382 views were recorded on the project webpage, including:
 - 287 visitors who were considered “aware” of the project (viewed the main page)
 - 163 visitors who were considered “informed” (viewed additional pages, documents or submitted comment forms)
 - 11 participants who were considered “engaged” (submitted a question or comment form)

As previously noted in this report, the Stage 1 engagement captured approximately 600 direct points of contact through surveys, discussion sessions, sounding board comments and open house events.

Next Steps

Feedback gathered throughout the engagement process has shaped the final draft of the *Recreation and Parks Master Plan: Gabriola, Mudge, and DeCourcy Islands (Electoral Area B)*. The *What We Heard* Engagement Summary will be posted on the Get Involved RDN project webpage. The final draft Plan, along with the engagement summary, will be reviewed by the Project Advisory Committee and the Electoral Area Services Committee before being presented to the RDN Board for consideration and approval by the end of 2025.

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Appendix A: Verbatim Comments from the Online Form

Contribution

As I was reading the water access part of the plan, it brought to mind a concern I've had about power boats around the island. We've noticed an increase of Jet skis and recreational powerboats (waterskiing) on Taylor Bay where our place is. I grew up in Northern Ontario and witnessed quiet lakes used for canoes, fishing, sailing, become laden with Jet skis and powerboats. Having seen the damage that motorized watercraft does to shoreline, not to mention gas pollution to the water, and noise pollution not just for residents but for marine life in the bay, and safety of those paddle boarding, kayaking etc., it might be wise to be proactive with motor craft restrictions; particularly if we are increasing/improving water access. The easier it is to access water, the more the Jet skis and roaring power boats will appear. Eventually, some Ontario lakes managed to become 'non-motor watercraft' lakes or would limit the motor power to no more than 12 km/hr or electrical motors only.

I recognize it would be easier to do that with a lake as signs can be posted at the water access area, whereas powerboats can come into a bay, and lower a Jet ski right there, but I feel any effort made to preserve the quiet, natural surroundings, the shoreline and noise pollution (above and below water) is good for the future of the Island. Thank you!

I'm dismayed that the plan does not begin to adequately address the fact that the term "parks" is seemingly meant to include nature reserves but has virtually nothing to say about them.

I almost stopped reading the plan when I saw that the focus of Strategy 5 seemed to envisage only FN and bureaucrats being involved in the creation and management of nature reserves. Nearly all of the personnel so involved do not live on the island, and lack detailed local and specialized knowledge of nature reserves and potential nature reserves on the island. Hiring consultants simply re-enforces the involvement of people who do not live on the island and all too often lack local knowledge and do not have the resources to consult with locals, the consequence of which is that they sometimes offer incorrect and out-of-date information and provide ill-advised opinions.

The RDN management of Coats Marsh RP, my special interest, is verging on atrocious in its lack of informative interaction with the public. All its planning is done as if it were private property.

Gabriola is, in my view, ill-served by GaLTT as a nature reserve lobbyist. It has a split mandate to advise on parks as recreational facilities and parks as nature reserves. This is a mandate in conflict. Furthermore, posing as the go-to "conservation" society on the island, reduces the impact of islanders who are dedicated to conservation in its broadest sense. Off-islanders rely almost entirely on GaLTT for advice or lack thereof thereby ignoring or not seeking the contributions of a people whose focus really is conservation and nature reserves and not parks for humans in general. The lack of a POSAC equivalent for RPs does not help.

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Thank you for a well put-together plan. I wanted to point out that while the plan says that we have over 130 water access points, including many for hand launching watercraft, I encourage you to go to those places and attempt to get a canoe or kayak through the trees, down the eroding bank, over the uneven rocks, and eventually into the water. We actually do not have that many easy and pretty much no accessible spots.

Thank you for including dog issues in the plan as well. As someone who walks reactive dogs on leash and frequently has had off-leash dogs with no recall come bounding up to us, I have felt like I have no recourse in talking to their owners. I believe the regulations say that they must be "under control," but everyone wants to believe their dogs are, until they can't call them back. It would be great to have on-leash trails and areas. I've had many people thank me for having dogs on leash, as they have had off-leash dogs behave so poorly. A better definition of "under control" would also be super helpful.

Thanks again and good luck with this process

Thanks for preparing this master plan - there are so many great ideas in it, and I look forward to seeing some of these ideas implemented in the upcoming years. A swimming pool on Gabe - that would be absolutely fantastic. As mentioned in the plan - having more access to pit toilets throughout the trail systems here would also be fabulous. Oh and more garbage bins scattered throughout the trail system, would hopefully help folks not to just drop litter along the trails. I love walking and biking the trails here on Gabe and am very grateful for all the recreation opportunities.

Re: Proposed Strategy "7B: Update the existing 707 Community Park Management Plan". The adjacent Coats Marsh Regional Park Management Plan should be updated at the same time. The existing trails network and ecosystems are intertwined with an administrative property line between the two.

I would really like to see a plan for a disc golf course on Gabriola Island. Recently, I've pitched the idea on the Gabriola Facebook page and seem to have very positive response on the idea. Similar to Pender Island, I feel it would be a great great thing for the community for all ages to use. Disc golf recently has been taking a major uptick in popularity due to the fact that people are strapped for cash and it provides a great healthy option for all ages to get outside and do.

People For a Healthy Community on Gabriola Society (PHC) is seeking to relocate its offices from the Gabriola Commons due to lack of space. Perhaps it should be involved with the investigation of a Gabriola Recreation Building to perhaps partner in it.

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I would like to see inexpensive rentals in community buildings for activities, in my case for life drawing sessions for artists

2. I would like to see a community center that is more centrally located on Gabriola for easier access for active transportation options than our current community hall.

4. I would like to see easier access for seniors to the Nanaimo swimming pool, perhaps a weekly bus?

5. I strongly support turning Barrett Quarry into a park, because it is also the aquifer for a large portion of the Whalebone neighbourhood.

6. I would support better launch areas for kayaks, especially in my neighbourhood of Whalebone. As a senior, it's becoming more difficult to carry my boat over rocks and logs, but I hope to continue kayaking for many more years.

7e. I would support an off-leash dog park in a central area.

8a. I would love a well-planned trail network for active transportation; I had a personal goal of reducing, and eventually eliminating, my motor vehicle use. The current state of Gabriola roads makes it frightening at times; narrow lanes, sharp corners, low visibility and deep ditches right beside the road surface, and the constant dodging of potholes. The speed limits are far too high to mix safely with motor vehicles. I understand this would also involve negotiating with MOTI.

You have missed some key feedback from Mudge residents. The lack of parks and trails on Mudge is left out of the master plan. With 0.2 perfect of Mudge island set aside as parks, we have no public spaces to walk in enjoy nature here. We need to acquire land for the community - the top 3 needs as shown in the survey are water access, open spaces, and trails. We need all 3 and all 3 could be solved tomorrow with an appropriate waterfront land purchase. No improvements would be needed, simply let us enjoy some forest, some shoreline, some space we were allowed to be! As you know, Mudge takes care of its own small parks. We mow them, we build our own benches, we don't ask for much. Maybe we will fundraise ourselves after all, but when the time comes, please have the RDN funding set aside to contribute!

Disc golf at Cox Community park. - Pender island has a community disc golf course with free discs and beginner friendly, free access, no prior knowledge or skills. It's really a great way to get people out in nature and enjoying a mossy forest. The world class disc golf course on Pender island could be recreated on Gabriola. BUT what makes the Pender course so special is the terrain. Boulders and arbutus trees and hilly valleys of Douglas fir forests. It's world class because it's a beautiful location and a joy to do the 18 basket course. Tourists and locals use the course and it brings people together interacting with an ecosystem through out the seasons.

Gabriola could have a great course but location makes or breaks a disc golf course. Somewhere with cliffs, sandstone boulders, hilly stretches and older growth trees.

Cox community park would be ideal, near the ferry and campground. But some hilly spots in the 707 could be interesting. BUT boring third growth flat land would be a dull and uninteresting course. The terrain is the biggest factor. Then getting disc golf experts to design the route/ course and install the baskets. It's a real community asset have a disc golf course, getting people of all ages and demographics out interacting with a forest ecosystem throughout the seasons.



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