

Ském'em Riverside Wetlands Community Park Management Plan

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Introduction

Ském'em Riverside Wetlands Community Park covers 91 acres of land within the traditional territory of Lil'wat Nation. The park includes a small wetland, hillside and riverside area with a variety of rich ecosystems, from wetland to dry, almost arid hillside. A CN railway and right-of-way runs through the middle of it. The park lands and surrounding area were traditionally used and occupied by the Lil'wat people for hunting, gathering, fishing, habitation and ceremonial purposes. The Ucwalmícwts term "Ském'em" means "to dig edible roots", which is a reflection of Lil'wat Nation's traditional use of the park area, and of the two traditional place names for the area: "Nxéw'ena Ském'em" (meaning lowland digging edible roots), "Ncá7a Ském'em (meaning highland digging edible roots)". In more recent years, non-aboriginal area residents have used the area for recreation. The north side of the park is held in fee simple title by the Squamish Lillooet Regional District for the use and benefit of the community of Pemberton, Lil'wat Nation, and Electoral Area C. The south side of the park is Crown Land under application for a park use tenure designation. This Management Plan has been developed collaboratively between the Lil'wat Nation and the Squamish Lillooet Regional District as a condition for the Lil'wat Nation to provide its support and consent for the designation of this park within its traditional territory.

The following describes the four key objectives for Ském'em Riverside Wetlands Community Park:

Conservation

- The park area has rich environmental diversity, particularly within the wetland. The park's valley floor is zoned CWHDS1 (Coastal Western Hemlock Dry Sub maritime, southern variant); hillside is zoned IDFWW (Interior Douglas-Fir Wet Warm).

It contains a variety of ecological communities within a very small footprint.

Protection of Lil'wat Cultural Sites and traditional uses

Ském'em Riverside Wetlands Community Park has a long history of use by the Lil'wat people and contains archaeological sites. From "Archaeological Overview Assessment (AOA) of the Proposed Riverside Park Near Pemberton (Lil'wat Nation and Arrowstone Archaeological Research and Consulting Ltd., 2013):

"According to numerous sources, an aboriginal trail traversed along the left bank of the Upper Lillooet River from its headwaters at Lillooet Glacier beyond Keyhole Falls and traversed through the Upper Lillooet Valley to Lillooet Lake. This is identified as TR1 in a traditional use study conducted of the Upper Lillooet River Valley (Angelbeck, Sanders, and Hall 2011:67-69). While the specific route of the trail is not known, and it may have been rerouted over the centuries, portions of the trail accordingly would have traversed across the point bar on which Riverside Park is proposed. Indeed, the two archaeological sites identified in the park likely mark stops along this trail."

An Aboriginal Interest and Use Study, undertaken by Lil'wat and SLRD identified that likely utilization of the park included forest utilization, a historic trail, and temporary camps.

There are two registered Archaeological sites located within the park – Culturally Modified Trees EbRq-18 and EbRq-19. Other cultural sites likely exist but have not been registered.

In close vicinity of the park is a Lil'wat Nation historic village site called S7áy'anicw.

Recreation

The park provides accessible and easy level recreational trails for hikers and bikers. It also provides access to more advanced mountain biking and hiking trails into the backcountry. The most frequent users of the park include mountain biking, hikers, bird watchers. Hunters and paragliders cross through the park to get to the Mackenzie basin beyond.

HISTORY

Lil'wat Nation has used Ském'em Riverside Wetland Community Park since pre-contact times, for a variety of purposes. There are many culturally modified trees, cache pits, some registered sites and others unregistered. The trail through the park is believed to be the original Lil'wat path alongside the wetland.

The park was briefly farmed in the 1940s. An old map shows a "turnip patch" on the northwest corner.

The Fulton family bought the property in 1962 and used the park as a family retreat until 2012.

In 2012, the Squamish-Lillooet Regional District and its partners purchased the park to be "protected for conservation and

Education

The park's proximity to schools and residential areas allows for a diverse range of learning opportunities in a natural setting. Ském'em Riverside Wetland Community Park has potential to provide educational opportunities for recreation use as well as teachings about plants, wildlife, archaeological sites, and Lil'wat people's historic use and occupation of the area.

Framework

Lil'wat Land Use plan s. 16.3: Lilwatátkwa (Lillooet River)

"Lilwatátkwa is in the heart of Lil'wat Traditional Territory. Many named places exist along the river's edges, and village sites, ceremonial places, hunting spots, and gathering sites line the corridor. The Lillooet River is also a critical travel corridor for bears, deer, and moose, and a home for mountain goats and many other species. Pinch points for wildlife movement enabled good hunting for our people.....A substantial number of Lil'wat cultural sites exist along the river corridor and surrounding lands. These sites must be identified during any development activity and preserved to avoid further incremental damage to our heritage".

Electoral Area C Official Community Plan Bylaw No. 689, 1999 (as amended)

12.6. Where possible, the Regional District supports the establishment of community parks at waterfront locations to maximize public access to water resources.

12.8. The Regional District shall continue to work toward formal dedication of the Riverside Nature Park, as shown on Map 5.1.

Current Land Uses

- Popular trails, mainly for mountain bikes but also hikers, on the hillside to the east.
- Hunters use the road through the park seasonally for access to Mackenzie Basin.
- Paragliders above (some use the Cloud 9 hiking trail beginning at the park boundary to hike up)
- River uses: dog walking, occasional swimmers, emergency take out landing for river users on sandy shore
- Bio Blitz and research such as bird counts, takes place annually
- South side of park: Section 16 Map Reserve, designated through the Sea to Sky Land and Resources Management Plan for the purpose of protection of culture and heritage.

Aboriginal Impact and Use Study Recommendations

An Aboriginal Interest and Use Study of Riverside Park was conducted by the Lil'wat Nation in 2013 in conjunction with the SLRD purchase of the Fulton Lands. The following is a list of recommendations from the study to be implemented within this Management Plan:

1. The proposed Riverside Park and Fulton land should be collectively co-managed between the SLRD and the Lil'wat Nation.
2. This AIUS Report should be used a guideline for developing a Co-management Plan for the proposed Riverside Park and Fulton land.
3. An information sign or kiosk should be installed to inform people about the Archaeological sites and Lil'wat Nation historic use of the area and the importance of protecting archaeological sites.
4. There should be ongoing and regular monitoring of the archaeological sites to ensure their protection.
5. The lands should be kept in its natural state as much as possible to protect the botanical resources.
6. Lil'wat members should be encouraged to use the lands for cedar root gathering, plant gathering and recreational and educational outings.
7. The shoreline of the proposed Riverside Park should be protected for its fisheries values.
8. The lands should be managed to ensure that any trail development or other development activity is properly authorized, and any activity causing ground disturbance is monitored for archaeological findings.
9. Management of the lands should include a strategy for increasing public awareness about the cultural sites and Lil'wat traditional territory.
10. Given the high use of the existing trails, appropriate trail maintenance needs to occur, and necessary enforcement to prohibit unauthorized trail development.
11. Legal access to the proposed Riverside Park should be established and any risk of liability for public use of the illegal access via the CN Rail Bridge should be addressed.

Partnerships

The purchase of the fee simple land which makes up the north side of the Ském'em Riverside Community Park was spearheaded by the Pemberton Wildlife Association, who engaged Ducks Unlimited, fundraised, and brought forward a proposal to the SLRD. As a result, the north side of the Ském'em Riverside Wetland Community Park was purchased by Ducks Unlimited, BC Nature's Trust and the Squamish-Lillooet Regional District in 2012 in partnership for the purpose of nature conservation and public enjoyment.

Ském'em Riverside Wetland Community Park is located within the traditional territory of the Lil'wat Nation and will be co-managed by Lil'wat Nation and Squamish-Lillooet Regional District through a

partnership agreement between Lil’wat Nation and the SLRD ¹, and a joint application for a Crown Land park use tenure..

The Lil’wat Nation and the SLRD will work in consultation with Pemberton Wildlife Association (PWA), Stewardship Pemberton, Village of Pemberton (VOP), Pemberton Valley Trails Association (PVTa), and other stakeholders in the community.

Structure of the partnership between the Lil’wat Nation and the SLRD will be staff level “steering committee” meetings when required, with policy direction from their respective Council and Board.

Action Plan

The four key objectives for Ském’em Riverside Wetland Community Park are conservation, protection of Lil’wat cultural sites and traditional uses, recreation, and education. This section provides proposed actions to meet each of these objectives.

Objectives	Goals	Strategies
Conservation	Control the number of trails and structures within the park.	1. No increase in the number of features and trails within the park will be permitted without mutual agreement between the co-managing parties.
	Continue to monitor the ecosystem	1. Foster partnerships with stakeholders such as Stewardship Pemberton, Pemberton Wildlife Association, Lil’wat and Pemberton schools and post-secondary institutions to research and monitor the park.
	Protect the ecosystem	2. Partner with existing organizations and encourage continued monitoring programs such as Christmas Bird Count and Bio Blitz.
	Prevent unauthorized alternations to the park	1. Education: information sharing via signs and social media 2. Monitoring and enforcement: take down unauthorized structures, close unauthorized trails.
	Effective monitoring and enforcement of Park Management Strategies	1. Regular monitoring by staff: monthly during winter months, biweekly once snow is gone 2. Annual visit by steering committee and other stakeholders to monitor the state of the park.

¹ Included as appendix

		<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. Take down unauthorized structures, close unauthorized trails, and work with the Province on mechanisms for issuing fines.
	Prevention and control of Invasive Species	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The Annual bio blitz will identify any new invasive species. An annual inspection by an accredited biologist should take place if the bio blitz is cancelled. 2. Work in conjunction with Stewardship Pemberton and Sea to Sky Invasive Species Council to manage invasive species.
Protect Lil'wat Nation Cultural Sites and traditional uses	Increase awareness of the cultural history of this park	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Use Ucwalmicwts language and place names within the park and other material related to the park. 2. Identify key Lil'wat activities, such as harvesting, fishing, in sign program.
	Balance protection of sensitive cultural sites with public access/education.	Steering Committee will work with Lil'wat Culture Heritage Language Authority to review each potential park feature to determine its visibility level.
	Encourage use of the park by Lil'wat members for traditional root and plant gathering	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Lil'wat participation in annual bio-blitz 2. Publicize Park features, such as Ucwalmicwts signage, on Lil'wat website 3. Use the park for Lil'wat ceremonies that can be open to the public
Education	Provide viewing areas for educational purposes	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ensure existing lookout access is maintained and improved when possible. 2. Adjacent to the existing lookout, construct an upland trail along the hillside to provide better viewing of the wetland. 3. Investigate feasibility of developing a constructed Lookout viewing platform on the southwest corner of the wetland, to take advantage of lighting and visibility of the wetland.
	Improve the park's public visibility	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Issue press releases on major events related to or occurring within the park. 2. Make regular postings on the SLRD and Lil'wat Nation website and social media about the park.

	Encourage use of the park for public events and open air classroom	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Provide educational materials (such as plant species and cultural sites within the park) to local schools, SLRD Recreation department, Lil'wat Recreation department, Stewardship Pemberton and other community groups that could be used for field trips and learning activities in the park. 2. Work with community groups and local governments on opportunities to use the park for public events.
	Create and share a park species database	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Use information gathered from the Annual Bio Blitz and other inventory programs such as bird counts and academic research projects to create a data base of species within the park. 2. Share the data collected with the public following each event.
Recreation	Safe access to the Park	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Promote existing alternative to the rail bridge via Pemberton farm Road to access the park. 2. Work with CN Rail for a public walkway along the CN Rail Bridge. 3. Install small park boundary signs at entry/exit points.
	Keep Park clean of litter and other Bear attractants	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Encourage pack in-pack out with signs and education tools.
	Manage recreation to avoid conflicts with other park objectives	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Identify areas where public use might impact cultural or conservation values and plan to direct public away from these areas.
	Keep trails clear and easy to use	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Regular inspection, annual brushing / clearing, raking.
	Maintain access year round	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Construct a new trail parallel to the road, above the valley floor, to improve access during spring/fall flooding.