



Regional Board Meeting

TO: Regional Board

FROM: Murray Kopp
Director of Parks Services

DATE: February 1, 2021

SUBJECT: Regional Parks Partnership Program and Friends of Regional Parks Capacity Building Grant Funding Proposal

Voting Entitlement: *All Directors – Stakeholder Weighed Vote – Majority – LGA 209)*

Purpose: The purpose of this report is to introduce a formalized Friends of RDCO Regional Parks Partnership Program, which includes a Handbook, Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), Annual Planning Documents and the implementation of an annual Friends of RDCO Regional Parks Capacity Building Grant Program.

Executive Summary:

The RDCO Parks Services Department has a long and successful history of working partnerships with Friends of Regional Parks groups and community partners, with dedicated staff working in tandem with these important partners to further mutual interests and the Regional Park program objectives. To date, Friends groups have been created through community impetus, with RDCO coming aboard after the Friends have already incorporated as societies. Staff have also been working with each group on a one-on-one basis without a formal framework that encompasses all of our partnerships with Friends groups.

The purpose of the Regional Parks Partnership Program (RPPP) is to create a framework for these crucial partnerships and to support the Regional District's efforts to formalize our working relationship with these groups. The key outcomes of the RPPP are:

- Offer the Friends of Regional Parks groups the guidelines and support to successfully get underway and start making an impact at the park they've chosen to support
- Offer Friends of Regional Parks groups a collection of best practices, resources, and responsibilities
- Outline roles and expectations, program planning, and legal requirements
- Establish a guiding framework for all current and future partnerships
- Provide a Friends of Regional Parks Handbook, Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), Annual Planning Documents and the implementation of an annual Friends of RDCO Regional Parks Capacity Building Grant Program

RECOMMENDATION:

THAT the Regional Board approve the Friends of Regional Parks Partnership Program.

Respectfully Submitted:



Murray Kopp, Director - Parks Services

Approved for Board Consideration



Brian Reardon, CAO

Prepared by: James Chester, Parks Partnership Liaison / Park Interpreter

Implications of Recommendation:

Strategic Plan: The 2020 Regional Parks Service Review addressed the following priorities in the RDCO 2015 – 2018 Strategic Priorities Plan:

- Provide Proactive and Responsive Governance
- Ensure Asset, Service and Financial Sustainability
- Protect and Promote Our Environment and Lifestyle
- Champion Communications and Engagement
- Empower our Employees

General: The 2020 Regional Parks Service Review recommends the reallocation of resources from the VIP program to support current and future growth opportunities via regional park focused NGO partnerships; this was identified as a key strategic investment initiative for the period extending from 2020 to 2025.

Financial: The 2020 Regional Parks Service Review identifies that the improved coordination of numerous opportunities for partnerships with private sector and community groups could lead to service efficiency gains for new initiatives within the Regional Parks system.

Legal/Statutory Authority: The delivery of the Regional Parks service and associated programming and services follows the Letters Patent for the Regional District.

Background:

In accordance with the 2020 Regional Parks Service Review, staff have developed a program to reallocate resources from the VIP program to support current and future growth opportunities via Regional Park focused NGO partnerships; this was identified as a key strategic investment initiative for the period extending from 2020 to 2025.

For more than 25 years, the Regional District of Central Okanagan's Regional Parks Friends Groups have supported, enhanced, and advocated for Regional Parks, facilities, and services. Friends Groups are individuals who come together to provide ongoing operations, programming, maintenance, and/or fundraising support at a park, facility, or specified program, and who work closely with RDCO Regional Parks staff to develop projects and plans.

Currently Regional Parks' staff work with over ten Regional Parks Friends Groups. The number of Friends Groups has grown alongside the number of Regional Parks throughout the Central Okanagan. With this influx of residents, concerned and passionate about the conservation and

programming of natural spaces in their community, the need for an outline guiding the relationship between each of these Friends Groups and Regional Parks has become evident.

The Regional Parks Friends Group Handbook establishes guidelines on:

- Ensuring that the Mission of Friends Groups are compatible with the Mission of Regional Park "*RDCO Regional Parks inspire our residents and visitors to discover, enjoy, celebrate, and, protect the places and experiences that help to define our special Okanagan sense of place.*"
- Creating a Memorandum of Understanding between each Friends Group and Regional Park as a foundation of the relationship that will foster our partnership into the future.
- Providing templates for annual planning of programs, activities and events. This set is an important piece of communication between the Friends Groups and Regional Parks to establish work plans for the coming year(s) and to determine realistic time frames for these projects.
- Outlining the support that Regional Parks can offer our Friends Groups, to demonstrate the appreciation and value of the hours of volunteerism provided. These supports include staff resources and grant funding to assist in the realization of the Friends Groups ambitions to enhance our Regional Parks and the experiences of the visitors to Regional Parks.

Through the proposed Friends of RDCO Regional Parks Capacity Building Grant Program, Parks staff have also addressed the 2020 Regional Parks Service Review CAO Recommendation #2 and the RDCO Board accompanying resolution (Sept. 10, 2020 Resolution #148/20) which identified that the regional parks program should consider enabling financial support with regional parks partner organizations:

2020 Regional Parks Service Review CAO Recommendation #2 - "Specifically support from partner organizations should be associated with the operation and installation of important park infrastructure in many regional parks and could include RDCO sponsored "partnership incentive" grants to support and leverage additional funds from outside sources."

Sept. 10, 2020 RDCO Board Resolution #148/20 – "THAT staff be directed to bring forward a regional parks grant funding policy for consideration."

The proposed Friends of RDCO Regional Parks Capacity Building Grant Program will provide the following benefits:

- Provides funding for Friends Groups' projects, programs, and other initiatives that further the missions of the Friends Group, the RDCO Regional Parks Service Program and the RDCO
- Provides a benefit to being a Friends Group
- Provide tools for new friend's groups to form and a way to support existing friend's groups
- The RDCO Board will annually consider and be requested to approve the total amount of funds available to support the grant program (i.e. 2021 - \$13,000; 2022 - 2025 \$15,000 annually)

- RDCO Parks staff will administer the annual delivery of the proposed grant program and have identified the attached “Friends of RDCO Regional Parks Capacity Building Grant – Evaluation Rubric” to assess the application submissions

Annual Friends of RDCO Regional Parks Capacity Building Grant Program Timeframe

- March 31st: If Approved by RDCO Board in the Five Year Financial Plan Bylaw - RDCO Regional Parks Capacity Building Grant Funds become available.
- April 15th: Friends Groups may submit an application for the funding.
- May 15th: Applications are reviewed and approved by the RDCO Parks Staff.
- December 15th: The RDCO transfers funds to the Friends Groups.

The impacts of the Regional Parks Friends Group Handbook and the Friends of RDCO Regional Parks Capacity Building Funding Grant will be seen in Regional Parks as soon as spring/summer 2021.

Alternative Recommendation:

THAT the Regional Board receive for information the report dated February 1, 2021 titled “*Regional Parks Partnership Program and Friends of Regional Parks Capacity Building Funding Proposal*” and provide alternate direction to staff.

Considerations not applicable to this report:

- Organizational Issues
- External Implications
- Alternative Recommendation

Attachment(s):

- Regional Parks Friend of Parks Handbook
- Regional Parks Friends of Parks Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)
- Friends of RDCO Regional Parks Capacity Building Grant Application
- Friends of Regional Parks Capacity Building Grant Rubric