

News Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

February 7, 2014



Key Land Added to Stoney Hill Regional Park

Duncan, BC – The ongoing implementation of the adopted Cowichan Valley Regional District (CVRD) Regional Parks and Trails Master Plan has achieved a further significant milestone with the addition of 38.8 acres (15.7 hectares) to Stoney Hill Regional Park overlooking Sansum Narrows. This undeveloped natural landscape is immediately adjacent to the 128 acre (51.6 hectare) Sansum Point property acquired under the CVRD's Regional Parks program in 2011, encompassing majestic cliffs above Sansum Narrows and supporting an ecologically valued Coastal Douglas Fir ecosystem. The property was purchased through the CVRD's Regional Parkland Acquisition Fund, with financial support from the Municipality of North Cowichan.

"The Regional District wishes to acknowledge the desire of the Bourke family of Victoria to see their property incorporated into Stoney Hill Regional Park," commented Rob Hutchins, CVRD Board Chair, "This land acquisition provides a key extension to the protection of the bluffs above Sansum Narrows, preserving dramatic viewscales and a place of special significance to many within the Cowichan Valley."

The assembly of these two properties incorporates over 165 acres (66 hectares) and are cornerstone to the establishment of Stoney Hill Regional Park as envisioned in the CVRD Regional Parks and Trails Master Plan. The CVRD will continue to pursue opportunities in future to incorporate lands which achieve the plan's objective to establish this major regional park for passive public outdoor recreation within a regionally valued landscape encompassing the Sansum Narrows bluffs, a Coastal Douglas Fir forest landscape, and marine foreshore overlooking the Gulf Islands, Maple Bay, the Narrows and Satellite Channel.

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Backgrounder

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Implementation of the *Regional Parks and Trails Master Plan*

The regional parks and trails program of the Cowichan Valley Regional District (CVRD) is guided by the *Regional Parks and Trails Master Plan*, adopted by the CVRD Board in 2007 following extensive community consultation across the region to develop the plan. A key component of the plan is identification of eleven priority sites of significance throughout the region to secure for outdoor recreation and environmental protection. These sites range from the Bald Mountain Peninsula at the east end of Cowichan Lake, to lands around Heart and Stocking Lakes above the Town of Ladysmith and the rolling knolls encompassing Cobble Hill Mountain. The capacity of the CVRD to acquire these sites for regional parks purposes is supported by the Regional Parkland Acquisition Fund, adopted as a region-wide funding bylaw in 2008. In 2013 this fund generated approximately \$768,000, which can only be expended on the purchase of lands for regional park purposes.

The *Regional Parks and Trails Master Plan* includes the Stoney Hill area within the Municipality of North Cowichan as one of the eleven regional park priority sites. The plan notes recreational opportunities in this area inclusive of hiking, mountain biking, kayaking, scuba diving and picnicking within a landscape encompassing an environmentally sensitive coastal bluff ecosystem, older second growth forest and the marine environment of Sansum Narrows and southern end of Maple Bay. In 2011, the Regional District in partnership with the Cowichan Land Trust and The Nature Conservancy of BC acquired 128 acres of waterfront, uplands and extensive bluffs overlooking Sansum Narrows as the first land acquisition towards establishment of Stoney Hill Regional Park.

The current acquisition of 38 acres from Mr. Paul Bourke and family of Victoria, BC was completed for a purchase price of \$925,000. This parcel borders the larger 128 acre property acquired in 2011. Public access to both properties remains limited to water access only at this time as there is no established public access currently in place from Genoa Bay Road. The Regional District is aware of public interest to access these lands and asks that the public be respectful of neighboring private properties and to not trespass. Securing improved access to these regional park properties for the public is a focus of the CVRD's regional parks and trails program.



*Bluffs on 38.8 acre property acquired overlooking Sansum Narrows and Satellite Channel
(CVRD Photo)*

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