



STAFF REPORT TO COMMITTEE

DATE OF REPORT November 3, 2023
MEETING TYPE & DATE Committee of the Whole of November 22, 2023
FROM: Parks & Trails Division
Operations Department
SUBJECT: Storm Damage to CVRD Parks and Trails Properties
FILE: 6030-30

PURPOSE/INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this report is to advise on the extent of damage to CVRD parks and trails properties as a result of the storm event on October 24, 2023.

RECOMMENDED RESOLUTION

For information.

BACKGROUND

A late October storm brought a rare early season snow and high-wind event from the north east within a short overnight time period, causing extensive tree damage and debris in many CVRD parks and trails. The combination of heavy rains in the preceding weeks with the trees still retaining a majority of their leaves, contributed to the significant branch and trunk failure caused by the wet, heavy snow on the deciduous trees across many Electoral Area and Regional Parks, and, in particular, the Cowichan Valley Trail.

The affected trees mostly consisted of Maple, Alder and Cottonwood, which are prevalent across the region. Parks with a significant deciduous tree canopy, such as Bright Angel Park, Old Mill Park and over 50 kilometres of the Cowichan Valley Trail, were hit the hardest, while other parks in the same affected area (i.e. West Shawnigan Lake Park) experienced minimal storm damage due to a predominantly coniferous stand of trees within the park. Subsequently, some of the newly planted (in the last ten years) specimen trees in the parks also experienced significant branch and trunk failure due to the significant weight of the snow snapping their young branches. Some of these trees will require extensive pruning to regain their optimal branch structure, while others will need to be replaced entirely.

Photographs detailing the extent of the damage to various parks, trails and the Cowichan Valley Trail from the October 24, 2023 snow/wind storm event are provided in Attachment A.

ANALYSIS

The totality of damage is currently being assessed by CVRD staff in order to tabulate an order of magnitude cost of tree removal and the associated cleanup/remediation. On the ground work commenced right away and all park sites are anticipated to be reopened by mid-November 2023.

Bright Angel Park and sections of the Cowichan Valley Trail were both closed to limit public access while crews removed overhead and on the ground debris. Large sections of the Cowichan Valley

Trail were completely impassible and required a six-person crew over one full week to remove the debris. The debris has been chipped and large sections of tree trunks remain onsite to promote biodiversity in the parks and trails. This overnight storm event has resulted in a total of four weeks of anticipated post-event cleanup, using a combination of specialized tree removal contractors, CVRD's Parks Maintenance Contractor, along with Parks & Trails Division operations staff.

FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

The costs to address the storm event are still being tabulated at the time of writing this report. However, as of November 3, 2023, costs are estimated at approximately \$30,000, and are anticipated to reach \$50,000 once the cleanup work is complete.

A combination of operating budget and reserve funds will be used to cover the costs. An allocation for storm cleanup has not been included in the Electoral Area or Regional operating budgets, and may be worthwhile considering for future budget cycles, given the frequency and severity of these unpredictable events.

COMMUNICATION CONSIDERATIONS

Park closure information was posted on the CVRD website, and sites were closed to public access by way of gate closures, caution tape and onsite signage.

STRATEGIC/BUSINESS PLAN CONSIDERATIONS

Strategic Objective #3: *3.6 Identify, build support and take action on additional initiatives across all of our services to reduce our wastes, cut our emissions and minimize our overall footprint; and*

Strategic Objective #4: *To support the development and use of alternative transportation opportunities in the region.*

The connectivity of the Cowichan Valley Trail between communities across the region provides an important active transportation and recreational corridor for safe walking, cycling and related non-motorized activities. Over 50km was impassible for days, resulting in impacts to commuters and regular trail users.

Referred to (upon completion):

- ☐ Community Services (Cowichan Community Centre, Cowichan Lake Recreation, South Cowichan Recreation, Arts & Culture, Facilities & Transit)
- ☐ Corporate Services (Finance, Human Resources, Information Technology, Legislative Services)
- ☐ Operations (Utilities, Parks & Trails, Recycling & Waste Management)
- ☐ Land Use Services (Community Planning, Strategic Initiatives, Development Services, Building Inspection & Bylaw Enforcement)
- ☐ Strategic Services (Communications & Engagement, Economic Development, Emergency Management, Environmental Services)

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Reviewed for form and content and approved for submission to the Committee:

Resolution:

☒ Corporate Officer

Financial Considerations:

☒ Chief Financial Officer

ATTACHMENTS:

Attachment A – Photographs of October 24, 2023 Storm Damage