qathet REGIONAL DISTRICT

SECTION 5	**INDIVIDUAL SERVICE POLICIES**
POLICY	**5.1.3**
SUBJECT	**PARKLAND ACQUISITION POLICY**
ADOPTED	**DECEMBER 11, 2025**

1. POLICY STATEMENT:

qathet Regional District (qRD) Parkland Acquisition Policy prioritizes providing high-quality recreation opportunities, protecting natural areas, and acquiring regionally significant lands. To achieve these goals with limited funding, the regional district will focus on leveraging partnerships and employing creative approaches to expand the inventory of regional parks and trails. This involves identifying priorities for parkland acquisition that align with current and future community needs.

2. PURPOSE:

The purpose of qathet Regional District's Parkland Acquisition Policy is to establish a consistent and transparent process for making decisions on the acquisition of parkland.

3. SCOPE:

This policy serves as a decision-making tool to guide the acquisition of regional parks and trails by the qathet Regional District.

4. RESPONSIBILITY/AUTHORITY TO ACT:

The following is an outline of the roles and responsibilities for the delivery of this policy.

4.1 Board

The Board may, by resolution:

a) Approve or disapprove any potential regional parkland acquisition following an evaluation of the proposed land using the parkland acquisition criteria score sheet (Appendix A) and an analysis of the short and long-term costs of the land acquisition; and

b) Identify issues, suggest updates, and adopt revisions to the policy.

4.2 Chief Administrative Officer and Staff

The Chief Administrative Officer and Staff will:

a) Administer the policy;

b) Make recommendations to the Board on the potential acquisition of regional parkland based on an evaluation of the proposed land using the parkland acquisition criteria score sheet (Appendix A) and an analysis of the short and long-term costs of the land acquisition; and

c) Identify issues and suggest updates to the policy to the Board.

5. POLICY GUIDELINES:

5.1 Prioritizing Parkland for Acquisition

The following criteria will be used to guide decisions on the acquisition of parkland that provides high-quality recreation opportunities, protects natural areas and is regionally significant.

- Sites with sensitive ecosystems/high levels of biodiversity
- Sites that contain species at risk
- Sites that have key habitats/wildlife corridors
- Sites with high cultural, historic, or heritage value
- Sites that provide access to ocean, lakes and rivers
- Sites that are connected to other parks and trails
- Sites with high education/research value
- Sites that are accessible
- Sites that are complementary to the parks system
- Sites in areas with little existing parkland
- Sites that are highly valued by the community
- Sites that are under threat from development
- Sites with partnership opportunities
- Sites that are available for acquisition
- Larger sites
- Sites that have high climate change mitigation potential
- Sites that are complementary to qRD planning initiatives

- Sites that can be acquired at reasonable cost
- Sites that are expected to have low annual maintenance costs

5.2 Financial Considerations for Parkland Acquisition

The following financial considerations will be used to guide decisions on the acquisition of parkland.

- Will the acquisition require the use of regional parks reserve funds? If so, how much?
- Will the acquisition require long-term borrowing? If so, how much?
- Are there grant funds available to boost parkland acquisition funds?
- Are there partnership opportunities with government agencies to support the acquisition?
- Are there partnership opportunities with non-government agencies to support the acquisition?
- Is this a donation of parkland from a private landowner?
- What are the forecasted annual maintenance costs for the parkland?
- What are the tax implications for regional residents?

5.3 Partnership Opportunities for Parkland Acquisition

The following partnership opportunities are integral to the provision of parks and trails throughout the region and should be maintained and strengthened to facilitate access to additional parkland.

- Partner with Government Agencies
    - Parkland can be acquired through partnerships with various levels of government and government agencies. For example, BC Parks has expressed interest in partnering with land trusts to acquire parkland.
    - Parkland can be acquired through Crown Grants and/or Nominal Rent Tenures over applicable Crown land portions of parkland acquisition sites. For example, BC Ministry of Transportation and Transit issues permits over Crown land right of ways for beach access trails and parkland acquisition sites. BC Ministry of Forests issues leases and licences of occupation over applicable Crown land portions of parkland acquisition sites.
    - Parkland can be acquired through Section 56 Trail Establishments and/or Section 57 Trail Authorizations for trails over applicable Crown land portions of parkland acquisition sites.
- Partner with Local First Nations

- Work with local first nations on parks and trails initiatives that share common benefits.

- Partner with Local Community Groups
    - Work with local community groups that provide essential services such as: developing and maintaining trails; providing infrastructure for access to backcountry and alpine recreation areas; maintaining and forming partnerships with landowners for access to privately owned areas; and, fundraising for parkland acquisition.

- Partner with Land Trusts
    - Work with land trusts including the Nature Trust of British Columbia and the Islands Trust Fund to encourage the acquisition and protection of natural areas for conservation purposes in perpetuity.

- Partner with Private Landowners
    - Work with private landowners to encourage financial contributions and gifts of land that meet parkland acquisition criteria and provide charitable tax receipts.
    - Support conservation covenants with landowners that protect natural areas for conservation purposes in perpetuity.
    - Explore opportunities for gifts of land under the Federal Ecological Gifts Program and the American Friends of Canadian Land Trusts.

- Partner with Crown Land Tenure Holders
    - Maintain communication and partnerships with licensed holders of Crown land, including Western Forest Products Inc (WFP) for example, for access to areas for recreation.

6. PROCEDURES:

The following provides an outline of required steps when considering acquisitions of parkland.

1. Staff evaluate and rank the candidate site(s) using the Parkland Acquisition Criteria Score Sheet in Appendix A. If more than one candidate site is being considered at the same time, the sites are compared by inputting the total score for each candidate site into the Summary Sheet in Appendix B.

2. Staff analyze the short and long-term costs of acquiring the candidate site by answering each of the questions listed above in Section 5.2 Financial Considerations for Parkland Acquisition.

3. Staff research partnership opportunities for acquiring the candidate site.

4. Staff prepare closed report for the Board that summarizes findings from steps one to three above and make recommendation to the Board on the acquisition of regional parkland candidate site(s).

5. Board considers staff report at a closed meeting of the Board and makes decision on whether to approve or disapprove of any regional parkland acquisition using the Parkland Acquisition Financial Decision Flow Chart in Appendix C.

7. RELATED POLICY:

qRD Procurement Policy - section 12.9

qRD Asset Management Policy - sections 2.2, 5.5 and 5.7

8. RELATED LEGISLATION:

BC *Community Charter* - section 90(1)(e)

APPENDIX A - Parkland Acquisition Criteria Score Sheet

PURPOSE:

The Parkland Acquisition Criteria Score is intended to be used to rank candidate sites for acquisition as regional parks.

INSTRUCTIONS:

Use the Parkland Acquisition Criteria Score Sheet to rank each potential site for acquisition. Definitions and a rating guide for each criterion are to be used to determine the score assigned to a potential site in each section. Each criterion is rated on a scale from Low (1 point) to High (5 points) and then multiplied by the number in the multiplier category. The multiplier represents the relative weighting of the category which was informed by Regional District and community priorities. Each site will be assigned a total score out of 250.

APPENDIX A

PARKLAND ACQUISITION CRITERIA SCORE SHEET

Properties rated are those identified as desirable additions to the existing regional park system. Highly-rated lands are those that would significantly contribute to the overall ability of the park system to deliver the conservation and recreation objectives of the park. As smaller components of the whole, they may rate highly in specific areas rather than encompass the entire spectrum of desirable values.

Candidate Site Name:	**Electoral Area:**
Principal Reason for Acquisition:	**Legal Description:**

RATING **Low / Poor** **Medium** **High / Excellent**

1 2 3 4 5

Criteria	Definitions	Rating Guide	Multiplier	Score
1. AVAILABILITY, SIZE, MANAGEMENT, AND EQUITY				
1.1 Availability	***Sites that are available for acquisition*** *Site is readily available, does not have any existing constraints that would limit park use and management, and does not present unreasonable development costs to the qRD.*	***Use the following to rank this criteria:*** (1) Low = The site is not currently available for acquisition and/or is jurisdictionally challenging to develop a regional park on the site (i.e. Crown Land, First Nations Land, Environmental Reserve, etc.). (3) Medium = The site is available for acquisition or may become available but acquiring the site presents challenges such as high development or acquisition costs. (5) High = The site is available for acquisition and presents few barriers to acquisition.	**10**	
1.2 Size	***Larger sites*** *Acquisition is prioritized depending on the relative size of the site. The larger the natural area the more important.*	***Use the following to rank this criteria:*** (1) Low = Sites smaller than 5 hectares. (3) Medium = Sites between 5-30 hectares. (5) High = Sites larger than 30 hectares.	**5**	
1.3 Management	***Sites that can be reasonably managed by the qRD*** *Acquisition is prioritized if the site does not present unreasonable management requirements to the qRD or partners.*	***Use the following to rank this criteria:*** (1) Low = Sites that present unreasonable management requirements such as remote locations or where service requirements would exceed the level of service provided at current regional parks and beach access trails. (3) Medium = Sites that do not present unreasonable management requirements and where the service requirements would not exceed the level of service provided at current regional parks and beach access trails. (5) High = Sites that do not present unreasonable management requirements and would require a level of service below current regional parks and beach	**5**	

Criteria	Definitions	Rating Guide	Multiplier	Score
		access trails.		
1.4 Equity	***Sites in areas with little existing parkland*** *Acquisition is prioritized if a potential site would address a gap in parkland availability to residents or is in an underserved area with no or few existing parks. The parcel is prioritized if it is centrally located and minimizes the distance residents need to walk to a park. Acquisition is prioritized in areas the value of the acquisition is relative to the amount of people who would benefit.*	***Use the following to rank this criteria:*** (1) Low = Sites in electoral areas with more than 100 hectares of regional parkland. (3) Medium = Sites in electoral areas with less than 75 hectares of regional parkland. (5) High = Sites in electoral areas with less than 25 hectares of regional parkland.	**5**	
Total Section 1				***0/125***

2. THREATS AND PROTECTION				
2.1 Development	***Sites that are in threat from development*** *Acquisition is prioritized if the site is threatened by potential development and is given priority over similar resources not vulnerable to destruction or development.*	***Use the following to rank this criteria:*** (1) Low = Sites that may be developed in the next 10 or more years. (3) Medium = Sites that may be developed in the next 5 years. (5) High = Sites that are in immediate threat by development (less than 5 years).	**5**	
2.2 Environmental Protection	***Sites that have key habitats/wildlife corridors; and/ or sites with sensitive ecosystems/high levels of biodiversity/species at risk*** *Acquisition is prioritized if a site provides ecological connectivity including linkages and wildlife corridors to natural areas, and sensitive habitat, or forms larger parcels of natural areas.* *Acquisition is prioritized if the site is a natural area with high conservation and ecological value, including habitat and biological diversity, and contributes to the vitality of the ecosystem (key habitat, migration areas, wildlife corridors, wetlands).* *Acquisition is prioritized if the site or area contains rare, threatened, or endangered plants, animals, and ecosystems, or contains habitat types*	***Use the following to rank this criteria:*** (1) Low = Sites with non sensitive or modified ecosystems, small, highly disturbed with no documented rare or endangered species, with fragmented habitats/ minimal documented wildlife corridors and not a key element requiring restoration. (3) Medium = Sites with sensitive ecosystems, some disturbance, moderate size, some intact habitats/ wildlife corridors, suspected rare and endangered species presence and use or moderately important element requiring restoration. (5) High = Sites with sensitive ecosystems, effective size to preserve ecosystem, in good condition, and confirmed presence of rare or endangered species or an opportunity to restore a critical component of an important ecosystem with significant overall synergistic benefits.	**5**	
2.3 Cultural Protection	***Sites with high cultural, historic, or heritage value; and/or sites with unique/significant landscape features***	***Use the following to rank this criteria:***		

Criteria	Definitions	Rating Guide	Multiplier	Score
	Acquisition is prioritized if the site has cultural significance (historic features, or archaeological resources), and would have the potential for effective protection and/or management/interpretation. Input from First Nations should be gathered before acquiring a site with important First Nations cultural values. Opportunities for collaboration and reconciliation with First Nations should also be prioritized. *Acquisition is prioritized if the site or area contains unique landscape or environmental features that are representative of the area, including unique or significant vantage points or viewing opportunities (for example, access to ocean, lakes and rivers), or offer unique park user experiences (birding, mountain biking, etc.).*	(1) Low = Sites with little known cultural significance and few unique landscape elements, viewing opportunities, or limited potential for novel experiences for visitors. (3) Medium = Sites with some cultural significance that presents opportunities for interpretation and/ or reconciliation. Sites with some unique landscape features that are seldom represented in the region, viewing opportunities and some potential for novel experiences for visitors. (5) High = Sites with high cultural significance that presents opportunities for interpretation and/ or reconciliation. Sites with distinctive landscape features that are seldom represented in the region, viewing opportunities, access to waterfront, and high potential for novel experiences for visitors.	***5***	
2.4 Climate Change Mitigation / Adaptation	***Sites that have high climate change mitigation/adaptation potential*** *Acquisition is prioritized if the site or area could provide or improve climate change mitigation and adaptation (old forests, wetlands/estuaries, coastal floodplains, riparian floodplains, groundwater protection, etc.).*	***Use the following to rank this criteria:*** (1) Low = Sites with limited potential for mitigating/adapting to climate change. (3) Medium = Sites with some potential for mitigating/adapting to climate change. (5) High = Sites with strong potential for mitigating/adapting to climate change.	**1**	
Total Section 2				***0/80***

3. SOCIO-POLITICAL, ACCESSIBILITY, EDUCATION				
3.1 Level of Public Interest	***Sites that are highly valued by the community*** *Acquisition is prioritized if the site is highly valued by the community. For example, the site is identified as an area of interest in qathet Regional District's Parks and Trails Strategy.*	***Use the following to rank this criteria:*** (1) Low = No apparent public or political interest in subject land (3) Medium = Measurable interest from community or advocacy groups (5) High = Significant lobbying, ongoing interest, and/or media coverage	**3**	
3.2 Connectivity and Accessibility	***Sites that are connected to other parks and trails; and/or Sites that are accessible.*** *Acquisition is prioritized if a potential property provides or improves physical connectivity to existing parks, outdoor recreation features, and trails, and helps create a network of public spaces.* *Acquisition is prioritized if the site or area is accessible in terms of distance from residents and has the potential to provide barrier-free recreation opportunities.*	***Use the following to rank this criteria:*** (1) Low = Sites that are in isolation, connecting to communities is not possible, and some present barriers exist to accessing recreation opportunities. (3) Medium = Sites that present some opportunities for connections between regional parks and beach access trails, and present few barriers to accessing recreation opportunities. (5) High = Sites that present significant opportunities for connections from communities to regional parks/beach access trails, or connections between communities, and present no barriers to accessing recreation opportunities.	**3**	

Criteria	Definitions	Rating Guide	Multiplier	Score
3.3 Education	***Sites with high education/research value*** *Acquisition is prioritized if the site or area has the potential to provide opportunities to experience and learn about nature through outdoor interpretation and has a unique natural resource message.*	***Use the following to rank this criteria:*** (1) Low = Sites that contain few features of educational interest and shows no current public use or desire for public use. (3) Medium = Sites that contain some landscape features of educational value but common and not in high demand. (5) High = Contain high experiential or educational values.	**1**	
Total Section 3				***0/35***
4. LAND PLANNING				
4.1 Planning Initiatives	***Sites that are complementary to planning initiatives*** *Acquisition is prioritized if the site or area complements existing qRD land use plans or Official Community Plans (OCP).*	***Use the following to rank this criteria:*** (1) Low = The site does not relate to any existing qRD land use plan or OCP. (3) Medium = The site relates to one existing qRD land use plan or OCP. (5) High = The site relates to more than one existing qRD land use plan or OCP.	**1**	
4.2 Partnerships	***Sites with partnership opportunities with other qRD planning and conservation initiatives*** *Acquisition is prioritized if there are potential partnership opportunities (with park planning and conservation initiatives) and opportunities to leverage funds from other sources.*	***Use the following to rank this criteria:*** (1) Low = Few opportunities are present for potential partnerships . (3) Medium = Some opportunities are present for potential partnerships. (5) High = Many opportunities are present for potential partnerships.	**1**	
Total Section 4				***0/10***
5. COST				
5.1 Capital Cost	***Sites that can be acquired at a reasonable cost*** *Acquisition is prioritized if the capital cost to acquire and develop the site has minimal impact on taxes for regional residents.*	***Use the following to rank this criteria:*** (1) Low = Minimal opportunities are present for funding partnerships or grants and site acquisition will require capital cost to purchase. (3) Medium = Some opportunities are present for funding partnerships or grants, and/or through subdivision park dedication requirements. Site acquisition will require little to no capital cost. (5) High = Donations of parkland that require no capital cost.	**5**	
5.2 Lifecycle Cost	***Sites that can be maintained over time at a reasonable cost*** *Acquisition is prioritized if the forecasted annual maintenance costs are low.*	***Use the following to rank this criteria:*** (1) Low = High amount of existing or proposed park infrastructure and/or established trail networks requiring higher levels of annual maintenance and considerable lifecycle replacement costs.		

Criteria	Definitions	Rating Guide	Multiplier	Score
		(3) Medium = Balanced mix of natural areas, park infrastructure and trails, requiring lower levels of annual maintenance and lifecycle replacement costs. (5) High = High proportion of natural areas with little to no trails or park infrastructure, requiring minimal annual maintenance and low lifecycle replacement costs.	**5**	
Total Section 5				***0/50***
GRAND TOTAL		***Total possible score = 300***		***0/300***

Scale:	**Low**			**Low-Medium**			**Medium**			**Medium-High**			**High**
	0	**25**	**50**	**75**	**100**	**125**	**150**	**175**	**200**	**225**	**250**	**275**	**300**

APPENDIX B - Parkland Acquisition Sites Summary Sheet

PURPOSE:

The Parkland Acquisition Sites Summary Sheet is intended to be used to compare candidate sites for acquisition as regional parks.

INSTRUCTIONS:

Once all the candidate sites have been ranked using the Parkland Acquisition Criteria Score Sheet, they can be added to the summary sheet for easy comparison.

APPENDIX B

PARKLAND ACQUISITION CRITERIA SUMMARY SHEET

Summary of Ranked Sites - TOTAL		
Candidate Site Name	**Description**	**Total Score**
Name XX		
Name XX		
Name XX		
Name XX		

Summary of Ranked Sites - BY CATEGORY		
Candidate Site Name	**Description**	**Score**
1. AVAILABILITY, SIZE, MANAGEMENT, AND EQUITY		
Total Section 1		***/125***
Name XX		
Name XX		
Name XX		
Name XX		
2. THREATS AND PROTECTION		
Total Section 2		***/80***
Name XX		
Name XX		
Name XX		
Name XX		

3. SOCIO-POLITICAL, ACCESSIBILITY, EDUCATION		
Total Section 3		***/35***
Name XX		
Name XX		
Name XX		
Name XX		

4. LAND PLANNING		
Total Section 4		***/10***
Name XX		
Name XX		
Name XX		
Name XX		

APPENDIX C

PARKLAND ACQUISITION FINANCIAL DECISION FLOW CHART

