

Greater Nanaimo Water District Lands

Area 1 – Proposed Residential Development



Summary

Since at least November 22, 2010 - at the regular meeting of council, and in subsequent council meetings, the recommendation to explore opportunities of this area for park and recreational use has continually been recommended by staff and supported by council.

A recent study of potential GNWD land usage was facilitated by an open house, online survey, and interviews held with a variety of rights holders and stakeholders from October 2016 to January 2017, which indicated that *over 90% are in favor of seeing the GNWD lands designated for park use*. The following rights holders and stakeholders were interviewed:

- Snuneymuxw First Nation
- City of Nanaimo Water Services
- Nanaimo Mountain Bike Club
- Nanaimo Search and Rescue
- Nanaimo Fish and Game Club
- Colliery Dam Preservation Society
- Harewood Neighbourhood Association
- Vancouver Island Real Estate Board
- Vancouver Island University

At the July 10, 2017 council meeting where only six members of council were present, staff recommended an area which is the entirety of Area 1 (as defined in the GNWD Biophysical Assessment) be designated as Parks and Open Space (PRC-1). Three members of council articulated that they would rather explore residential development opportunities for a portion of Area 1 in the GNWD lands. As a result, the motion to designate the entirety of Area 1 into PRC-1 was unsuccessful, and the potential for residential development opportunities are now intended to be explored.

Reconsideration and Designation

This unexpected change of direction that has been initiated by certain members of council “on-the-fly” to promote the idea of residential development for a portion of this land sets a dangerous precedent for this and other areas which are currently used as parkland but not yet designated as such, and should not be permitted to proceed forth on such a finite resource in this haphazard manner.

The reasons provided by those on council who want to explore the idea of residential development in Area 1 do not support the majority of feedback that has been provided by the public, rights holders, and stakeholders. There are numerous other areas that are suitable for residential development; council should not support encroaching further at this location towards existing parkland whatsoever.

Residential development in Area 1 will destruct valuable habitat, waste an optimum location for park land, and ruin significant recreational activity in this area. Simply put, residential development in Area 1 is not in the community’s best interest.

Council should approve the request for reconsideration and as per staff’s prior recommendations designate the land as PRC-1 in order to ensure its protection from potential development in the future.

See photos and renderings contained towards the end of this document for further visual documentation of Area 1 and the impact that residential development would have upon it.

Area 1 Highlights

- Dominated by mature second growth Douglas fir, and contains individual or small clusters of old growth trees with diameter of approx. 1m
- A variety of species of interest were documented during the Phase 2 Biophysical Assessment:
 - o Marten
 - o Barred Owl
 - o Chestnut-backed Chickadee
 - o Common Raven
 - o Golden-crowned Kinglet
 - o Northern Saw-whet Owl
 - o Red Tailed Hawk
 - o Black-tailed deer
- The Phase 2 Biophysical Assessment recommends that there should be habitat management activities directed at protecting sensitive species occurring on GNWD Lands involving maintaining existing patches of mature tree cover wherever they occur on the site
- The Phase 2 Biophysical Assessment states that “If any development of the property is planned in the future, Aquaparian recommends a site-specific, activity-specific Environmental Protection Plan (EPP) be prepared by a Qualified Environmental Professional (QEP) to provide guidance to mitigate potential impacts from the proposed development and to make recommendations for compliance with provincial and federal regulations.”

Biophysical Assessment Phase 2 Report – Area 1 Refresher

Area 1: Area 1 is the northern portion of the study area. It is roughly triangular in shape, bounded to the southwest by the Nanaimo Parkway; by Colliery Dam Park to the north / northwest; and by a residential neighborhood to the east. The area is approximately 42.6ha in size.

Area 1: This area of the subject property consists predominately of the eastern half of Colliery Dam Park; east side of the two small reservoirs. The most prominent topographic feature of Area 1 is a conglomerate bedrock ridge aligned roughly southwest to northeast located in the centre of the study area. Most of the northwestern edge of the ridge forms a vertical rock wall up to 5m in height. From the base of the rock wall northwest toward Middle Lake, the terrain continues to slope down moderately to steeply. The southern and eastern half of Area 1 is characterized as gently sloping toward the north and northeast.

Area 1:

The forest community is dominated by mature second growth Douglas-fir with lesser amounts of western red cedar (*Thuja plicata*) and minor amounts of grand fir (*Abies grandis*) and big leaf maple (*Acer macrophyllum*). A few individual or small clusters of old growth trees were found throughout the site with diameter at breast height (DBH) of approximately 1m. The understory is dominated by salal (*Gaultheria shallon*), Oregon grape (*mahonia nervosa*), sword fern (*Polystichum munitum*), red huckleberry (*Vaccinium membranaceum*) and oceanspray. Other understory species include trailing blackberry (*Rubus ursinus*), bracken fern (*Pteridium aquilinum*), kinnickinnick (*Arctostaphylos uva-ursi*) and twin flower (*Linnaea borealis*). The forest floor is covered in a variety of mosses including lanky moss (*Rhytidiadelphus loreus*), Oregon beaked moss (*Kindbergia oregana*) and step moss (*Hylocomium splendens*). Invasive species included English ivy (*Hedera helix*), holly, and spurge laurel (*Daphne laureola*). A bedrock ridge located centrally within the area creates small openings in the forest with exposed bedrock and shallow soils covered by several moss species and clusters of licorice fern (*Polypodium glycyrrhiza*) along the vertical east-facing rock wall. These moss openings are identified as Terrestrial Herbaceous (TH) sensitive habitats. A survey during the growing season did not identify any rare flowering plants. These areas were small and patchy located along the ridge tops within the property. All were quickly draining with no significant seepage to support the more rare herbaceous species.









