

INTRODUCTION

Management Planning Process

British Columbia Parks Division (BC Parks) of the Ministry of Water, Land and Air Protection prepares a management plan to guide a protected area's management over the next ten to twenty years¹. The plan sets out objectives and strategies for conservation, recreation, development, interpretation and operation of a protected area. A management plan relies on current information relating to such subjects as natural and cultural attributes, and recreation opportunities within a protected area together with land management activities on surrounding lands.

The process for preparing a management plan involves a careful analysis of the overall goals of the protected area, use patterns, management objectives, and possible sources of conflict among protected area policies. Through the planning process, various options for managing the protected area are developed and assessed. In choosing the most appropriate option, the intent is to ensure the management decision protects the values of the protected area and that human use within and adjacent to the protected area does not result in unacceptable impacts.

A management plan not only establishes long-term management direction for a protected area, but also gives direction for immediate issues. As a result, a management plan contains numerous statements describing management strategies to be undertaken. As BC Parks is unable to carry out all strategy items at the same time, the management plan must also set priorities.

Management plans are prepared with a high degree of public involvement. The general public and public interest groups have opportunities to review management planning documents and provide comments to BC Parks through a variety of means including public meetings. Similarly, BC Parks consults with First Nations, other levels of government and other provincial government agencies in the development and review of management plans. In certain instances, public advisory committees help prepare the management plan and often function as a partner with BC Parks in implementing the plan and monitoring progress.

For Francis Point Park and Ecological Reserve, the management planning process has relied on a variety of background information:

- The Francis Point Provincial Park and Ecological Reserve Background Report, the preparation of which included consultation with various government agency staff including Sunshine Coast Regional District (SCRD) staff, knowledgeable individuals and review of various studies and reports related to the site;
- Francis Point Provincial Park Traditional Use Assessment and Site Protection Plan, which included consultation and recommendations from the *shishálh* (Sechelt Band);
- Agreements between land owners (The Nature Trust of British Columbia (TNT), and the Nature Conservancy of Canada (NCC)) and the Province of BC, which provide management direction for the Park and Ecological Reserve;

¹ While management plans are initially developed to guide the management of a protected area for a five to ten year period, a number of factors will influence how long the plan will be valid. Should this management plan still provide appropriate management direction for Francis Point Park and Ecological Reserve after ten years, and still be appropriate with respect to the goals and vision of this protected area, the plan may still be deemed appropriate until such a time that updating or re-writing is required.

- Input from an advisory group meeting October 13, 2001 in Pender Harbour to discuss issues, solutions and directions to manage the Park and Ecological Reserve;
- BC Parks principles, policies and guidelines; and
- Public review of a draft of this document (available through local libraries, BC Parks web site, and a public meeting on November 19, 2001 in Pender Harbour) from which comments received were considered in finalizing management direction.

Background Summary

Francis Point Provincial Park and Ecological Reserve, acquired in 2001, are relatively undisturbed examples of the Very Dry Maritime Subzone of the Coastal Western Hemlock biogeoclimatic zone (CWH xm1). The CWH xm1 is one of British Columbia's most under-represented biogeoclimatic variants with only 1.9% of the variant's landbase represented in protected areas.

Located approximately 35 km north-west of Sechelt in Pender Harbour on British Columbia's Sunshine Coast, Francis Point Park and Ecological Reserve are situated on the south-west portion of Beaver Island, known as Francis Peninsula (Figure 1 Regional Context). Francis Point Park is 72.80 ha and Francis Point Ecological Reserve is 9.22 ha. The Park is bounded on the north and east by residential properties and on the west and south by Malaspina Strait. Access to the Park is on Francis Peninsula Road from Highway 101 near Madeira Park. The park can be accessed by following Francis Peninsula Road to its terminus on the park's northern boundary or by turning off at either Merrill or Rondevue Roads to access the Park along its eastern boundary. There is no road access within the Park or Ecological Reserve (Figure 2 Park and Ecological Reserve Map).

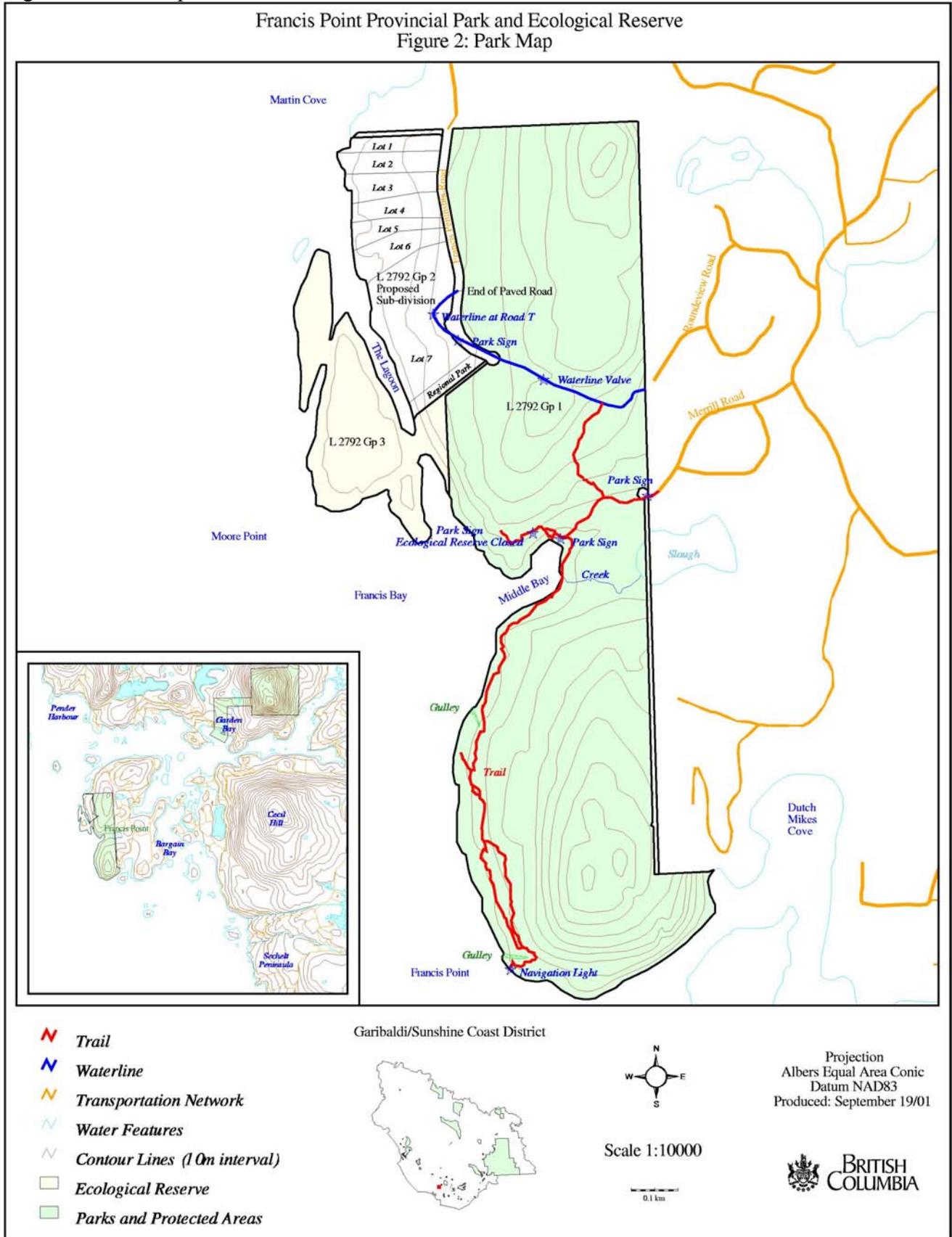
The topography of the site is varied, ranging from sea level to approximately 100 meters in elevation at two hills on the north and south sections of the Park. The hills are separated by a low area in the middle of the site adjacent to Middle Bay. The vegetation in the protected areas is primarily an open canopy coniferous-dominated forest. About 20% of the site is not forested because of extreme dry conditions and rocky substrates. The open areas support scattered shrubs, and a carpet of mosses, lichens, wildflowers and grasses. The approximately four kilometers of undeveloped shoreline includes rocky bluffs and several small coves with pocket beaches characterized by low rock tables at or near sea level.

The Park contains two red-listed and one blue-listed plant associations. Red and blue-listed plant (forest) associations occur in all parks within the CWH xm and the CDF mm subzones where old growth or mature forest stands are present. In this respect, Francis Point Park and Ecological Reserve are comparable with other protected areas or parts of them (e.g. Bowan Island and East Redonda Ecological Reserves, and Desolation Sound, Copeland Islands, Jedediah Island, Read Island, Simson, Thurston Bay, John Dean, Goldstream, and Gowlland-Tod Provincial Parks). Although there are no tracked occurrences on record with the BC Conservation Data Centre (CDC), a survey conducted in August 2001 noted the presence of the blue-listed dune bentgrass. An unusual grass-moss/lichen community was also identified during the August 2001 survey, which forms the

Figure 1: Regional Context Map



Figure 2: Park Map



most sensitive part of the rock outcrop vegetation. Special mention is made of this community as it contains a combination of uncommon grasses that is not found elsewhere in the site series (e.g. CWH xm1- 02).

Wildlife in the Park and Ecological Reserve is typical of a coastal forested site along the Sunshine Coast. The largest habitat type in the Park and Ecological Reserve is the mature second growth forest (primarily coniferous) with a number of old growth elements (e.g. veteran old growth trees and snags) which provide habitat to a number of species including primary and secondary cavity nesters, insectivorous birds, small mammals and bats. Previous surveys indicate the potential for approximately 35 land bird species and 45 marine bird species that could be observed on the site and along the shoreline. The most common mammal sign noted is for Columbian black-tailed deer, Douglas squirrels and river otters. Francis Point Park and Ecological Reserve will become increasingly more important for species dependent on old growth and older second growth forested habitats as the surrounding area grows and develops.

The Park and Ecological Reserve are within the *shishálh* traditional territory. From a traditional use assessment conducted in the summer of 2001, it was concluded that traditional aboriginal use of the Park and Ecological Reserve area was of a very specialized and strategic nature (e.g. transient camp and lookout). The one recorded archaeological site located within the Park is a midden at the head of Middle Bay which is limited in size and reasonably well protected by natural obstacles.

This is a new Park and Ecological Reserve that was previously under private ownership. Prior to 2001, the property was owned by the McQuarrie family for 90 years. The property was largely undeveloped and forested. There is evidence of logging in the first part of the twentieth century in the central and northern portions of the park.

There are no recreational facilities in the Park or Ecological Reserve. Despite the lack of facilities and that “no trespassing” signs were posted when the lands were under private ownership, people have enjoyed hiking along undeveloped trails. The public continues to access the trails from the road ends at the Park Boundary and to some extent from the water, primarily at Middle Bay. There is to be no access to the Ecological Reserve without a permit from BC Parks.

Relationship to Other Land Use Planning

The Francis Point Park and Ecological Reserve property has been under private land ownership since 1911. The McQuarrie family owned the property for 90 years. The Nature Conservancy of Canada (NCC) working with the local Francis Point Marine Park Society (FPMPS) raised funds to purchase the property from the McQuarrie family and were able to secure a significant donation from the U.S. based Paul G. Allen Forest Protection Foundation. With additional funds acquired through the Private Forest Biodiversity Program, a partnership between Forest Renewal BC and The Nature Trust of British Columbia (TNT), together with a contribution from the Sunshine Coast Regional District, the property was acquired by TNT and NCC in 2001. Francis Point Park is owned by TNT with a 99 year renewable lease to BC Parks and Francis Point Ecological Reserve is owned by NCC with a 99 year renewable lease to BC Parks. The intent of the land agreements is that the properties owned by TNT and NCC is managed by BC Parks to conserve the biodiversity values of the site and representation of the CWH xm1. Francis Point Park and Ecological Reserve are scheduled for designation in 2002.

Francis Point Park and Ecological Reserve and adjacent lands on Francis Peninsula are located in the Sunshine Coast Regional District within electoral area A. Land use is subject to the Egmont/Pender

Harbour Official Community Plan (OCP) and Zoning Bylaw No. 337. Land use and zoning adjacent to the Park and Ecological Reserve is residential. Much of the land along the Park boundary remains in a relatively undisturbed state, including a continuum of forested land between the north-east corner of the Park and a small Regional District special feature park known locally as “Trout Lake”. There is also a regional park allocation as part of the proposed subdivision of Lot 2 of District Lot 2792 (see Figure 2) that would provide a buffer along the Park and Ecological Reserve at the head of the Lagoon. Opportunities may exist to encourage appropriate natural buffer areas along the Francis Point Park boundary as the adjacent area develops in the future.

An overall land use plan (e.g. LRMP) may be prepared for the Sunshine Coast region in the future but is not expected to impact or affect the management of the Francis Point protected areas.

One of the original intentions of the Francis Point Marine Park Society in conserving the Francis Point Park and Ecological Reserve property was to also conserve the adjacent subtidal marine resources. At this time only a 100 meter foreshore area will be included within the protected areas. Analysis and decisions on larger marine protected areas are not included in this plan and will need to be considered within a broader Marine Protected Areas Strategy.

Management Issues

The overarching issue for Francis Point Park and Ecological Reserve is determining appropriate recreational use in the Park that will not compromise the biodiversity values on the property. Conservation is the primary focus of the Park and Ecological Reserve. From the land agreements between BC Parks and the land owners (i.e. TNT and NCC) and from an ecological assessment conducted in August 2001, there are a number of constraints for this protected area.

Under land agreements between BC Parks, TNT and NCC management direction is for:

- A day use public park with a wildlife habitat and enhancement purpose;
- Recreational, educational and scientific uses appropriate to this purpose; and,
- No road access to be constructed into the Park.

From the ecological assessment:

- Under no circumstances should areas occupied by the rare-listed plant communities be utilized for park facilities (e.g. buildings, picnic and campgrounds, playgrounds and roadways); and,
- Trail and public recreation access must not be allowed in the Ecological Reserve.

From the conservation focus of the Park and the context provided by the constraints, the following table identifies the interrelated issues that require management action.

Theme	Issue
Ecological Mapping and Sensitivity Assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The rare-listed forest communities and sensitive moss/lichen grass community need to be identified and mapped to help in the location of recreation facilities, determine appropriate management options, and provide a baseline for monitoring.
Park Access and Facility Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parking options must be planned and managed to avoid potential safety and congestion concerns at the road ends. • The access points to the Park must be determined in order to plan and manage trails that will minimize impacts to the Park’s natural values. • Existing and potential new trails need to be evaluated for their impacts, proximity to highly sensitive plant communities, safety concerns, viewscape considerations, and visitor experience. There is a need to provide access without compromising the conservation values of the Park. • The design of the trail to Middle Bay from the primary access point requires review to assess the feasibility for wheelchair access with minimal impact to the Parks’s natural values. • Marine access points to the Park need to be identified and managed to minimize impacts to the foreshore and inter-tidal zone. • The type and location of other facilities necessary to support appropriate recreational activities needs to be determined.
Invasive Species Control	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A few individuals of particularly invasive weedy species have been found and should be removed to avoid a larger long-term problem. • A regular monitoring program to identify and remove new invasive non-native plants is required to maintain the relatively pristine example of the native plant communities in the Park and Ecological Reserve. • The planning, design and management of trail access should consider measures to minimize the introduction and spread of invasive non-native plants.
Park Information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The type, amount and distribution method of Park information must be identified. This will be a crucial issue in a park with high conservation values which could be significantly impacted by overuse.
Monitoring	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Determine what additional baseline information is required to support regular monitoring programs. • Determine what ongoing monitoring programs are required to identify potential impacts or changes to the Park’s natural and cultural resources.