

Outdoor Recreation Opportunities/Facilities

The following outlines the recreation opportunities available in the Park and identifies facilities to support the recreation activities. Prior to any facilities being developed, including trails, it is standard BC Parks policy that they be subjected to an environmental assessment to determine what impacts, if any, may occur and what adjustments to the location or design should be incorporated to avoid or minimize any impacts.

Hiking and Walking

Despite the fact that “no trespassing” signs were posted when the lands were under private ownership, people have enjoyed hiking along undeveloped trails in the Park. The public continues to access the trails from both the road ends at the Park Boundary and to some extent from the water, primarily at Middle Bay. The most frequently used trail is from the Merrill Road end to Middle Bay. Signs around the Ecological Reserve note that there is no visitor access without a permit from BC Parks.

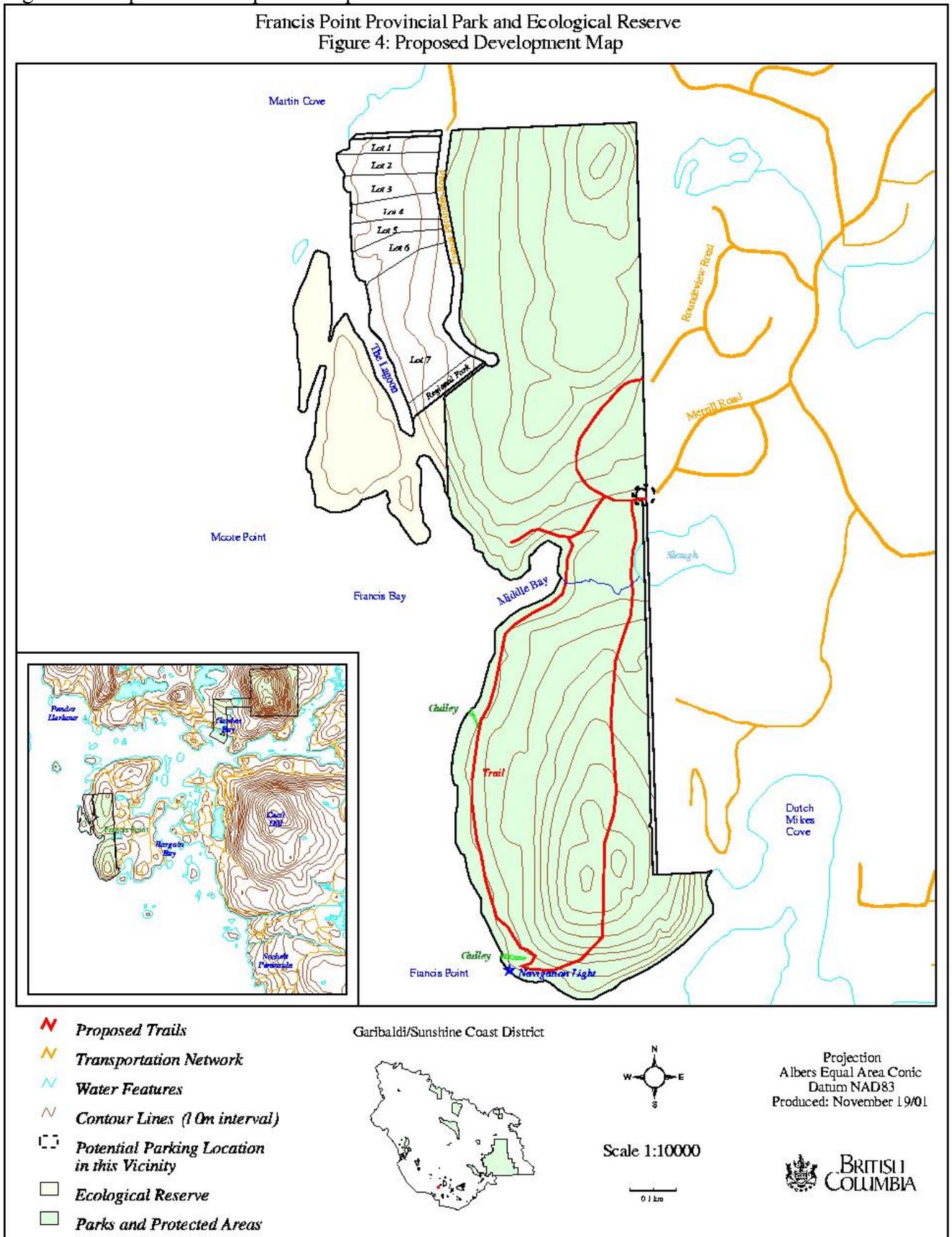
To date low human impact has left most of the shallow-soiled, coastal bluff vegetation intact. However the coastal bluff vegetation is starting to show signs of deterioration as more people use the undeveloped trail network from Middle Bay to the southern tip of the Park. The challenge to maintaining the plant communities in the Park, particularly the intact coverage of the sensitive grass-moss/lichen community on the rocky outcrops will be managing access by people and domestic animals.

All trails developed in the Park should be located so as not to damage sensitive areas or vegetation. Prior to trail construction, impact assessments must be completed to ensure all aspects of environmental impacts are considered and mitigated. Trails must be built to appropriate BC Parks standards to accommodate the intended use and minimize erosion.

Objectives	Strategies
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To encourage a range of walking and hiking opportunities within the Park that avoids disruption of sensitive plant communities and wildlife, incorporates safety, and allows visitors exposure to the varied natural features and viewsapes. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Trail access will be developed to Middle Bay from the parking lot and primary access point to the Park and from Middle Bay south to Francis Point. In addition consideration should be given to developing a trail from Francis Point up to the height of land at Francis Hill and back along the eastern section of the Park to Middle Bay.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No trail access will be developed in the Ecological Reserve. Visitor access is not allowed into the Ecological Reserve without a permit from BC Parks.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regular monitoring of visitor use of the trails and impacts to the natural resources will be implemented. Management action will taken as required.

Objectives	Strategies
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider a secondary trail up to a viewpoint on the bluff north of Middle Bay. Conduct an environmental assessment to determine potential impacts to the bluff vegetation from trail access to this area and incorporate design considerations to provide safe access and to minimize visitors leaving the trail. The viewpoint may require a viewing structure (eg platform) to control potential impacts.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inventory and assess the potential for additional trails in the Park, including a trail in the northern portion. More information about the vegetation and wildlife habitat in this area is required to determine the environmental acceptability for creating trail access.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider development of the trail from the parking lot to Middle Bay to wheelchair accessible standards.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To provide minimal facilities to support the walking and hiking activities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop a parking area that minimizes the loss of any trees within the Park and is designed to blend into the Park edge. Provide a trailhead area that provides for an aesthetic visitor experience with signage introducing visitors to the Park, and that identifies both appropriate and prohibited activities.

Figure 4: Proposed Development Map



Natural Values Appreciation

With environmental conservation being the main purpose and focus of the Park, one of the more compatible recreational activities for this protected area is nature appreciation.

Objectives	Strategies
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To encourage interpretive and nature appreciation opportunities that are compatible with the conservation focus of the Park. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explore the opportunities for volunteers, including local community groups to develop interpretive information in conjunction with BC Parks and to conduct interpretive walks.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide minimal and unobtrusive interpretive signage to retain the natural experience of the Park.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cooperate with the Sechelt Indian Band in conducting culture based interpretive tours in the Park.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To provide minimal facilities in the Park to protect the “naturalness” of the setting and visitor experience. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide two benches at Middle Bay placed discreetly within the tree edge.

Marine Activities

The Park and Ecological Reserve are bounded by four kilometers of undeveloped shoreline along Malaspina Strait. Small craft (e.g. kayaks, canoes and small runabouts) can access the protected area at a number of small coves. There is no access to the Ecological Reserve which prohibits access to Moore Point at the various coves, including the Lagoon on the north side of the isthmus joining the Ecological Reserve to the Park and the small bay on the south side of the isthmus. Middle Bay is the only probable marine access point to the Park where small boats (e.g. kayaks, canoes and small runabouts) can be pulled up on the beach.

Recreational SCUBA diving has occurred north of the Park in Martins Cove and adjacent to the Francis Point Park and Ecological Reserve off the tip of Moore Point and off the southern end of Francis Point. Access to SCUBA diving along the foreshore of Francis Point Park and Ecological Reserve has been by boat. Marine access using Park trails from the parking lot for SCUBA diving is not popular due to the length of the trail. Thus SCUBA activities will continue to be based from boats and no facilities are required in the Park to support SCUBA diving.

Recreational fishing (both fin fish and shell fish) occurs from boats and is subject to the policies and regulations of Fisheries and Oceans Canada. BC Parks will have rights to 100m of foreshore adjacent to the Park and Ecological reserve. There will be a no take policy within the Park and Ecological Reserve foreshore for shellfish.

Some swimming and snorkeling occurs in Middle Bay.

Objectives	Strategies
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To support marine activities that are compatible with the conservation focus of the Park and do not impact the intertidal marine resources. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Marine use will be for day use only due to the lack of anchorage and the closure of the Park to overnight camping.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monitor the degree of marine access activity and any impacts to the foreshore and implement corrective measures as appropriate

Hunting

Francis Point Provincial Park and Ecological Reserve are included as part of Management Unit 2-5. In recent years hunting activity within the protected areas has been closed due to its close proximity to adjacent settled areas. Due to the small size of the park area and the continued presence of adjacent settled areas the Park and Ecological Reserve remain closed to hunting.

Objectives	Strategies
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue closure of the protected areas to hunting. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure closure of the Park and Ecological Reserve to hunting is maintained.

Other Activities

Park Policy and government direction provides for a variety of recreation activities to take place across British Columbia's park system. However not all of these activities are suitable for each individual park such as Francis Point. This may be due to their impacts on the environment, impacts on other users, the availability of other opportunities within close proximity to the park, or to the lack of appropriate facilities. Mountain biking, overnight camping, campfires, picnic area facilities, large organized group activities, or the presence of domestic animals are not acceptable activities for Francis Point Provincial Park.