

# The Role of the Park and Ecological Reserve

## Provincial and Regional Context

The Pender Harbour area on the Sunshine Coast within which Francis Point Park and Ecological Reserve are located is characterized by an intricate shoreline of bays, islets and islands, providing sheltered conditions for year round recreational activities. The abundance of water and land resources in the area provides a diversity of recreation opportunities to both local and seasonal residents and tourists. However, the amount of privately held shoreline property has resulted in very few large coastal parcels that can provide examples of the indigenous plant communities in a relatively undisturbed state. In addition, the amount of privately held shoreline property has limited the opportunities for public access to the water.

The Francis Point protected areas offer opportunities to protect relatively undisturbed examples of the Sunshine Coast coastline and to provide a regionally and provincially unique hiking and viewing opportunity. These opportunities complement the conservation and recreation values found in adjacent provincial and regional parks.

The roles of the Park and Ecological Reserve described below, together with the following Vision Statement for the Park and Ecological Reserve, guide the management activities outlined within the management plan. These roles are consistent with the broader Protected Area Strategy Goals and the BC Parks System Goals as described in Appendix I.

## Conservation Role

The conservation role of the Francis Point Park and Ecological Reserve is to ensure the ongoing representation of a relatively undisturbed example of the CWH xm1, including several rare-listed plants and forest communities and the unusual and highly sensitive non-forested grass-moss/lichen community.

Occurring within the Very Dry Maritime Subzone of the Coastal Western Hemlock biogeoclimatic zone (CWH xm1), Francis Point Park and Ecological Reserve contributes to representation of the CWH xm1 in the province. Table 1 outlines the CWH xm1 that is currently represented in protected areas and the contribution of Francis Point Park and Ecological Reserve.

Table 1 Francis Point Park and Ecological Reserve Contribution to CWH xm1 Representation

Biogeoclimatic variant	Total CWH xm1 in province (ha)	% CWH xm1 protected in province	Francis Point Park and Ecological Reserve % contribution
CWH xm1	437,945	1.94%	0.02%

Other important conservation values include:

An unusual grass-moss/lichen community that forms the most sensitive part of the rock outcrop vegetation. This includes the blue-listed dune bentgrass and a rare native subspecies of red fescue;

- An above normal species richness of vascular plants for the size of the Park and Ecological Reserve;
- Little evidence of invasive non-native plant species;
  - Two red-listed (endangered or threatened) and one blue-listed (vulnerable) plant associations.  
Red-listed:
    - CWH xm1- 01 Western Hemlock - Douglas-fir - Oregon Beaked Moss; and
    - CWH xm1- 02 Douglas-fir - Lodgepole Pine - Rhacomitrium.
  - Blue-listed:
    - CWH xm1- 05 Western Redcedar - Swordfern
- A site that will become increasingly more important for wildlife species dependent on old growth and older second growth forested habitats as development increases in the Pender Harbour area; and
- Over four kilometers of a relatively undisturbed and varied foreshore and intertidal area.

## **Cultural Heritage Role**

The cultural heritage role at Francis Point protected areas is limited due to few heritage sites located within the areas. However, the adjacent land areas were extensively used by First Nations and were important in the first European settlements along the Sunshine Coast. The protected areas can provide an opportunity to interpret cultural heritage in a setting which closely resembles a relatively undisturbed example of the historic Sunshine Coast ecosystem and landscape.

## **Recreation Role**

The outdoor recreation role of Francis Point Park is as a day use area focused on limited low impact recreation activities in a coastal forest and marine foreshore setting, including nature appreciation, hiking and walking, and landscape viewing.

The Park contributes to the collective recreational values in the Pender Harbour area, including:

- Public access to the marine foreshore;
- An opportunity to experience a rare undisturbed coastal forest site in this area of the Sunshine Coast; and
- Significant viewsapes both from and to the water.

## Vision Statement

The purpose of the vision statement is to identify the role and function of the Park and Ecological Reserve well into the future, beyond the life of the management plan. The long-term vision assists in ensuring the shorter term management strategies are consistent with meeting this vision.

*Francis Point Provincial Park and Ecological Reserve contribute significantly to the conservation values on regional, provincial, national, and international levels. The Park contributes significantly to recreation values on a regional and provincial level. Public and commercial activities are in harmony with natural values and are sustainable.*

*The ecological reserve protects a special area that is a typical and undisturbed example of the Very Dry Maritime Subzone of the Coastal Western Hemlock biogeoclimatic zone. Recreation is prohibited within the reserve but opportunities for scientific study and research are permitted to enhance scientific knowledge of the CWH xml variant zone. Francis Point Park protects similar conservation values as the ecological reserve as well as a forest area with significant old growth values. The natural values in the park and ecological reserve remain free of significant invasive non-native plant species.*

*Francis Point Park offers sustainable recreation opportunities for hiking, nature appreciation, and landscape viewing within a unique relatively undisturbed coastal forest. These opportunities continue in a manner that is carefully monitored and managed and which sees no significant increased impacts upon the park's natural values.*

## Relationship with First Nations

The Francis Point protected areas are located within the traditional territory of the Sechelt First Nation. The protected areas are fee simple private lands which are managed as a provincial park and an ecological reserve. Traditional and contemporary First Nation activities which could occur within the protected areas would be the same as those activities which could occur on any private lands. Management within other adjacent provincial parks would be different and would allow for a greater opportunity to practice traditional activities for present and future generations of the First Nation's people.

BC Parks and The Nature Trust of British Columbia would welcome the opportunity to work with the Sechelt First Nation to ensure protection of cultural resources and for the provision of culture based tours within the park area. BC Parks and the Sechelt Indian Band have completed a Traditional Use Assessment and Site Protection Plan which supports these opportunities and which can be used to provide guidance in the management of cultural resources.

# Park Zoning

## Introduction

BC Parks uses a zoning system to assist in the management of Francis Point Provincial Park. Zoning is used in park planning to develop general management guidelines for areas of a park on a geographical and ecological basis (see Appendix B). Each zone reflects a general level of management with respect to natural, cultural and recreational values. Francis Point Provincial Park is divided into one zone, the **Special Feature Zone**.

The Francis Point Ecological Reserve is not managed under the zoning system. Table 3 indicates the activities that will apply for the ecological reserve.

## Special Feature Zone

### Zone Objective

To protect the natural values of the CWH xm1 biogeoclimatic zone found within Francis Point Provincial Park while allowing limited day use recreation opportunities.

### Zone Description

This zone includes the landbase found within the Park and is 72.80 hectares in size.

### Zone Rationale

This zone was chosen for the following reasons:

- Facility development within this area will be restricted to parking, trailheads, trails, signage and associated facilities.
- The primary management direction will be the protection of natural or conservation values of the park.
- The area is relatively small and must be managed as a single unit.

### Zone Activity

Table 2 indicates the activities and uses that will apply within this Special Feature Zone in this park. Activities within the zone will be managed to protect the conservation values of the park and to maintain relatively low use, low intensity levels of recreational use.

Table 2 - Acceptable Uses, Activities and Facilities at Francis Point Provincial Park

Activity/Use/Facility	Acceptable Uses	Comments
Hunting	N	Already closed due to close proximity of residential areas.
Fishing	Y	Foreshore area; Will remain open to finfish subject to regulations.
Trapping	N	
Domestic Animals including dogs and horses.	N	Closed due to fragility of park vegetation and soils.
Mountain Biking	N	Closed due to fragility of park vegetation and soils.
Guide Outfitting (hunting)	N/A	
Guide Outfitting (fishing)	N/A	
Guide Outfitting (river rafting)	N/A	
Overnight Camping	N	Closed due to fragility of park vegetation and soils.
Campfires	N	Closed due to fragility of park vegetation and soils.
Commercial Recreation (facility based)	N	Facilities not to be developed within park.
Commercial Recreation (non facility based)	M	Only for low impact activities and upon completion of an impact assessment.
Trail Access	Y	According to development plan, Figure 4.
Motorised Water Access	M	Encouraged to Middle Bay only.
Commercial Filming	N	Closed due to potential for soils and vegetation impacts.
Fire Management	Y	Subject to fire management plan.
Forest Insect/Disease Control	N1	Allowed for protection of key natural values.
Noxious Weed Control	Y	
Exotic Insect/Disease Control	N1	Allowed for protection of key natural values.
Scientific Research (specimen collection)	M	
Scientific Research (manipulative activities)	M	

Table 3 - Acceptable Uses at Francis Point Ecological Reserve

Fire Management	Y	Subject to fire management plan.
Forest Insect/Disease Control	N1	Allowed for protection of key natural values.
Noxious Weed Control	Y	
Exotic Insect/Disease Control	N1	Allowed for protection of key natural values.
Scientific Research (specimen collection)	M	
Scientific Research (manipulative activities)	M	
Recreation or commercial activities	N	Closed due to impacts within the ecological reserve.

Y= allowed subject to conditions identified in the management direction statement or management plan

M= may be permitted if compatible with protected area objectives

N= not allowed

N1= allowed for expressed management purposes only

N2= present and allowed to continue but not normally allowed