

11 October 2022

David Sheffield  
Park System Planner, Regional Parks  
Parks & Environment  
Metro Vancouver  
4515 Central Blvd.  
Burnaby, BC V5H 0C6

Dear David:

### **Metro Vancouver proposal for a new regional park on Bowen Island**

Thank you for contacting me, and for making time for a preliminary discussion about the proposed regional park on the undeveloped Cape Roger Curtis lands, here on Bowen Island.

I mentioned during our first phone call that, in principle, the Bowen Island Conservancy<sup>1</sup> supports the acquisition of the currently undeveloped lots for the establishment of a regional park, with a focus on land conservation and preservation of the natural environment in as undisturbed a state as possible. Consequently, we wish to work with your organization in a collaborative manner, as your plans for the proposed park are formulated and assembled into a comprehensive management plan. Given our deep historical knowledge of the lands in question, our role in managing the Fairy Fen Nature Reserve (which is in a Crown Land block adjacent to the lands), and our roots on Bowen Island and in the local community, we are able to provide background expertise on the local ecosystem, as well as insights and experience related to Cape Roger Curtis and Bowen Island as a whole, and experience that will prove valuable as the proposed park is created.

At the same time, given the proximity of the proposed park to the Wild Coast Nature Refuge (the “WCNR”, owned and managed by the Conservancy), and the likelihood of substantial increased public visitation to the area, I need to outline several concerns that have been raised by our volunteers and Directors. As well, on behalf of the Conservancy Board, I have a proposal for your consideration, concerning Lot 23, which is immediately adjacent to the east of the WCNR.

### **Concern #1: Impact on the Wild Coast Nature Refuge**

The Conservancy acquired the three lots that comprise the WCNR late in 2020, and formally opened the area to the public in May of this year. Our goal for the WCNR is aligned with our mandate: *to preserve and protect the natural environment*. Our primary objective is to leave the area alone: to minimize any sort of disturbance, and to allow nature to thrive free from human and other impact. The WCNR is home to several rare species of flora and fauna, and, in particular, the coastal bluffs are covered with a rich variety of lichens and mosses. Our secondary objective is to allow human visitation that has as low an

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<sup>1</sup> The Bowen Island Conservancy is a well-established organization, founded in 1997, dedicated to the conservation of Bowen Island’s natural environment. A BC Society and registered charity, we have over 180 paid up members and enjoy broad support from the Bowen Island community. Our activities include advocacy for nature, public education, and making natural areas available to the public.

impact on the area as possible: for example, we have used the driveway corridors (established by the original developers) as trails, carefully placed signage to deter visitors from walking around on the bluffs, and have put in place a “no dogs” policy to mitigate the effects of canine disturbance.

The proposed regional park will border the Nature Refuge on the north and east sides. Visitors to the park will, of course, have access to the WCNR, and **we are concerned about the impact of increased visitor traffic in the Refuge**. We are particularly worried about the possibility of people visiting the park bringing invasive species into the WCNR, being accompanied by their dogs, and walking on the bluffs, trampling the plants that grow there. We welcome ideas from your organization about ways to mitigate this kind of increased human visitation.

We are also concerned about preserving the existing conservation and wildlife corridors that connect to the WCNR from the rest of the Cape Roger Curtis lands, which will be part of the proposed park. We want to be certain that, as you move forward, the entire area that constitutes the non-residential part of the Cape is considered holistically, to minimize disruption or other negative impacts on these corridors.

## **Concern #2: Impact of camping**

We understand that the proposed park will incorporate camping facilities, and are, therefore, concerned about:

1. **Water:** seeps in the WCNR are highly dependent on the flow of groundwater; these seeps are seasonal and are so sensitive that they are in an area of the Refuge where public access is prohibited. We are concerned about how much water on the upland portion of the Cape lands will be made available to campers, and how this will affect the availability of water in the WCNR, and elsewhere in the proposed park. Both of our organizations need to collaborate on this issue to mitigate negative impacts in the entire area.
2. **Sanitation:** increased human activity, particularly camping, means that toilets, washing facilities, and garbage must be taken into consideration. How will this be addressed by Metro Vancouver to ensure that impact on the lands are minimized: that there are no effluent leaks, grey water will be dealt with properly, and garbage will not become an ongoing problem?
3. **Fire:** a major concern is the possibility of fire breaking out and spreading to other parts of the island. We'd like to understand your organization's position on camp fires, and how any policies concerning them that are put in place will be monitored and enforced. People particularly enjoy camp fires in the evenings, and so the potential of a forest fire spreading to other parts of Bowen Island into the night is particularly acute. The Conservancy would like a complete ban on open fires at Cape Roger Curtis, with enforcement by Metro Vancouver staff.
4. **Traffic management:** opposition to the proposed park is already mounting from residents of Adams Road and Whitesails Drive, because of the potential for increased vehicle traffic. This is leading some to propose that an alternative access to the Cape be constructed from Thompson Road. The Conservancy opposes this access route, since it will impact the Fairy Fen Nature Reserve. We hope that another alternative access route will be considered by Metro Vancouver. We also prefer that vehicle camping not be allowed: we do not wish to see an increase in traffic, or the construction of multiple parking spaces anywhere on the Cape lands.
5. **Damage to the coastal bluff ecosystem:** any camping on the shoreline of the Cape lands will inevitably result in damage to the sensitive coastal bluff ecosystem from human foot traffic. Experience in other parks and areas with similar coastal bluffs shows that, over time, the plant species are damaged beyond repair and that eventually all that is bare rock. We do not want to see this happen at Cape Roger Curtis.

## **Our proposal concerning Lot 23**

We have the following proposal for consideration as the proposed park is created: **make Lot 23 a part of the WCNR, and align the objectives for the lot, and its management, with the WCNR.**

Lot 23 is immediately adjacent to the east side of the WCNR and is bordered on its eastern boundary by Huszar Creek. The Conservancy attempted to acquire lot 23 in 2021, for incorporation into the WCNR, but was not successful. The lot is home to an eagle's nest, and a ravine/riparian ecosystem carrying Huszar Creek.

Making Lot 23 part of the WCNR would:

1. Eliminate camping, and minimize human disturbance, around the eagle's nest;
2. Minimize the impact of dogs on the eagle's nest, the lot as a whole, and, in particular, the riparian zone around Huszar Creek;
3. Incorporate the lower portion of Huszar Creek into the WCNR and enable the riparian zone to thrive undisturbed;
4. Ensure that specific findings resulting from an ecological assessment that relate to the flora and fauna within Lot 23 are addressed and managed as part of the overall WCNR Management Plan;
5. Increase the WCNR area, thereby leaving more of the Cape Lands in a state as close to undisturbed as possible;
6. Represent and require a high degree of collaboration between Metro Vancouver and a well-regarded Bowen Island organization, which, I believe, would be viewed favourably by our local community.

## **Summary**

We know that Metro Vancouver has a successful track record of establishing well-regarded parks throughout the region, and that your organization will address the concerns listed above in a thoughtful and appropriate way. And, we hope that you will consider carefully our proposal concerning Lot 23: our team of experts is available to meet with your colleagues to discuss this proposal in more detail at your convenience.

By collaborating with the Bowen Island Conservancy on the creation of the proposed regional park, Metro Vancouver has the opportunity to partner with a longstanding Bowen Island organization. During the upcoming rezoning process for the proposed park, meaningful collaboration will be critical to gaining public support. We look forward to hearing from you about steps that we may take together to build a successful partnership that will ensure that the proposed park is seen as a positive and valuable benefit to both Bowen Island and the larger Metro Vancouver community.

Yours sincerely,



Bowen Island Conservancy  
Owen Plowman, President, for the Board  
Ellen Coburn, Allie Drake, Paula Hay, Louise Loik  
Nerys Poole, John Rich, Bob Turner, Peter Williamson