



REPORT

To: Regional Parks Committee

Report Number: CS-RPC-004

From: Trish Morgan, General Manager of Community Services

Date: November 25, 2020

Subject: **Montney Park – Transition to Day-Use**

RECOMMENDATION #1:

That the Regional Parks Committee recommend that the Regional Board authorize that Montney Centennial Park be transitioned from an overnight campground to a day-use only park, for a three year pilot project starting in 2021 and ending December 31, 2023.

RECOMMENDATION #2:

That the Regional Parks Committee recommend that the Regional Board approve the Montney Centennial Park Development Plan, dated July 13, 2020, which provides recommended updates and improvements for the park over the next five years.

BACKGROUND/RATIONALE:

At the February 13, 2020 PRRD Board Meeting, the following resolution was passed:

MOVED, SECONDED, and CARRIED

That the Regional Parks Committee be provided with a report outlining the costs and benefits of transitioning Montney Centennial Regional Park from an overnight camping site to a day use only recreation area.

Montney Centennial Regional Park (22.8ha) is located on the northeast side of Charlie Lake. There are three other campgrounds in proximity to Montney, which offer over 200 campsites on the lake. Given the number of available sites, which are more easily accessed and include more overnight amenities, the demand for overnight camping at the Park is expected to remain low. Concerns have been raised regarding the open park configuration and lack of privacy while camping. This limits the attractiveness of the Park to small groups, and instead encourages large “group” camping experiences.

For the 3 year pilot, the focus at Montney would be to develop park amenities and activities to encourage additional day-use activities on the lake. The proposed upgrades to the Park are complimentary to both day-use and overnight camping. If the Regional Board decides, following completion of the pilot project, that the Park should remain an overnight campground, any upgrades made over the next two and a half years will compliment both a campground and day-use site.

Due to COVID-19, in 2020 the Park was open for day-use only, and moving forward would not require any significant changes to “officially” transition from a campground. Staff would ensure that the public are aware of the change in status of this park. If approved, barriers will be repositioned so that the

parking area can be used by vehicles for day-use but RV's will not be able to access the area. Additional signage will be posted.

In 2017 and 2018, public engagement was completed as part of the development of Montney Centennial Regional Park Plan. Input suggested that the Park is valued by those who use it; however, there is limited knowledge about the park and its amenities. Park visitors expressed concerns about limited recreational assets in the Park. Public input suggested that the most desired recreational amenities are as follows:

• Fishing dock	73.7%
• Improved toilets	60.5%
• Swimming dock	57.9%
• Group picnic shelter	57.9%
• Hiking trails	55.3%
• Improved boat launch	44.7%
• Interpretive signage	39.5%
• Winter activities	39.5%
• Mountain bike trails	36.8%

Development Plan

Going forward, the purpose of the Development Plan is to provide a road map for upgrades to the Park in order to meet the goals of the Montney Centennial Regional Park Plan (2018), the Regional Parks Committee and the Regional Board. Each year the Plan will be brought forward to the Committee for review and will be a living document. The Plan outlines the projects for the current year and next four years with estimated costs. Projects budgeted in the current year will be completed first. If funds remain after current projects are completed, staff will be able to move forward with completing projects planned for the next year. In some cases a budget amendment may be required in order to complete capital projects planned for the next year; however, a number of smaller projects may fall under operations and minor capital.

The proposed plan uses data brought forward through the Montney Centennial Park Plan process, and current trends and best practices in other similar parks throughout the province. It is recommended that these upgrades happen in a phased approach, subject to regulatory approval, and over a number of years.

Please note that any plans to put in a Frisbee-golf course or mountain bike trails would be developed in association with a community group who would be willing to assist in maintaining any infrastructure installed. It should be noted that the Montney Centennial Park is currently subleased to the Northland Trail Blazers, who have a small clubhouse and recreational area for their members.

Upgrades by Area

Upgrades are subject to regulatory approval and may change based on provincial or other requirements. The Development Plan will be updated on an annual basis to reflect changes and requirements.

Park Access Road

In 2020, a study was undertaken to provide an engineered solution to fix the access road to the Montney Centennial Park. The conclusion of the study was that there would be a significant cost to repairing the road, estimated at \$691,000; this cost includes contingency, engineering allocation, and allowances for construction and supplies. Staff are working with the consulting company to see if there are options to phase the project, and any cost savings that could be found.

Lakefront Recreation Area

This Plan would see the current lakefront access area improved with the addition of a boat launch, fishing dock, new outhouse, a parking area for boat trailers and the removal of the existing ‘campsite’ amenities. Note that staff are investigating with the Agricultural Land Commission (ALC) the possibility of a boat launch as it may not be a permitted use in the Agricultural Land Reserve. If it will not be allowed, this area will be re-examined. In 2021, staff will work with the ALC Land Use Planner to determine what uses are allowed at this park, and the process to do so. No funds have been budgeted in 2021 for this area.

(New) Forest Activity Zone

New activity area developed in the forested area east of the current outhouses. This space is relatively flat and would be used to encourage natural and outdoor inspired education for non-profits, school districts, etc.

Trail Staging Area

This area is located at the southernmost end of the current camping area. This will be the starting point to recreational trails loops and will include a picnic area, improved parking, outhouse, signage and pinch point to restrict motorized vehicle access.

Recreational Trail Loops

Trails would be installed that traverse the natural areas of the Park. A small loop trail would be developed to be accessible for people of varying abilities, with the larger loop hiking trail developed for more moderate and/or physically active individuals. Trails could be used in the winter, if desired, for non-motorized recreation, such as for cross-country skiing or snowshoeing.

Tobogganing/Winter Activity Area

It may be possible to use the natural terrain of the property to find an appropriate tobogganing hill for winter use. Given that winter in the Region can last for over half the year, providing winter activities would draw people to the park for the ‘off-season’ months.

Other

A number of upgrades are recommended for inclusion in this Park Development Plan that do not fit into the other ‘areas’, including a new entrance sign, an accessible path to the outhouses, outhouse improvement/replacement, and updated regulatory signage.

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS:

1. That the Regional Parks Committee provide further direction.

STRATEGIC PLAN RELEVANCE:

☒ Not Applicable to Strategic Plan.

FINANCIAL CONSIDERATION(S):

The total proposed cost for development over 5 years is estimated at \$433,500. Staff are working with an engineering firm to determine final pricing, but an additional cost of approximately \$691,000 has been proposed for road remediation and storm water runoff. Opportunities for grant funding will be sought when available, to offset funding from taxation. The Development Plan outlines the estimated costs for each asset and will be updated on an annual basis and brought forward for consideration during budget.

COMMUNICATIONS CONSIDERATION(S):

If the Board approves the pilot project, a communications plan will be developed to inform the public.

OTHER CONSIDERATION(S):**Considerations for Development**

Various aspects of the Development Plan will require consent and/or permits from different Provincial organizations, such as the Agricultural Land Commission, the Ministry of Environment and Climate Change Strategy, the Ministry of Forests, Lands, Natural Resource Operations and Rural Development, and the Peace River Regional District.

License of Occupation

The PRRD has a License of Occupation from the Province for this property, which will come up for renewal in 2028. The License of Occupation restricts the PRRD from cutting or removing timber from the land without prior written consent from the Province, and requires Provincial approval for any alterations or improvements to the land. If approved by the Regional Board, the Development Plan will be reviewed with the Province to ensure compliance with the agreement.

Agricultural Land Commission Approval

Montney Centennial Regional Park was developed by the Montney Recreation Commission prior to the creation of the Agricultural Land Reserve in 1972. However, in order to develop the Park as outlined, staff will need to discuss the project with the Agricultural Land Commission (ALC) Land Use Planners to determine if a non-farm use or exclusion application would be required or recommended.

Peace River Regional District Lakeshore Development Guidelines

In 2000, the PRRD developed Lakeshore Development Guidelines to help guide environmentally responsible development on lands in proximity to lakes in the PRRD. The guidelines apply to private lands situated within 300m of the natural boundaries of lakes, and while the Montney Centennial Regional Park is public land, it should adhere to the guidelines where possible. These guidelines help manage development on lakeshore lands for the benefit of the environment and the community, and provide direction on siting, design, access, vegetation management, and construction materials for development in the lakeshore area.

Ministry of Forests, Lands, Natural Resource Operations and Rural Development

Installation of concrete boat ramp and small fishing dock would be subject to permit approval from the Ministry of Forests, Lands, Natural Resource Operations and Rural Development as well as the ALC.

Development Permit Area

The Park is affected by the North Peace Fringe Area Official Community Plan Bylaw No. 1870, 2009, and states that no person shall alter land, including the removal or trees or vegetation, the removal or deposit of soil, and/or construct a building or structure prior to the landowner applying for, and receiving, a development permit from the PRRD. It is anticipated that a [Development Permit](#) will be required.

Ministry of Environment

As the property is within the Ministry of Environment Watershed Reserve No. 0288651, Document No. 73265, any development that is proposed needs to be discussed with the Ministry of Environment and may be subject to further regulations or restrictions.

Attachments:

1. Draft Montney Centennial Regional Park Development Plan (2020 – 2024)

External Links:

1. [Montney Centennial Regional Park Plan \(February 2018\)](#)