

# REGIONAL PARKS PLAN



JUNE 2014

Produced by John Glynn-Morris General Consulting





*Trails in Chadburn Lake Park. Source: John Glynn-Morris.*

The Regional Parks Plan was produced by John Glynn-Morris General Consulting for the City of Whitehorse, Planning Services Department.

Cover:

*Top photos: Anthony DeLorenzo*

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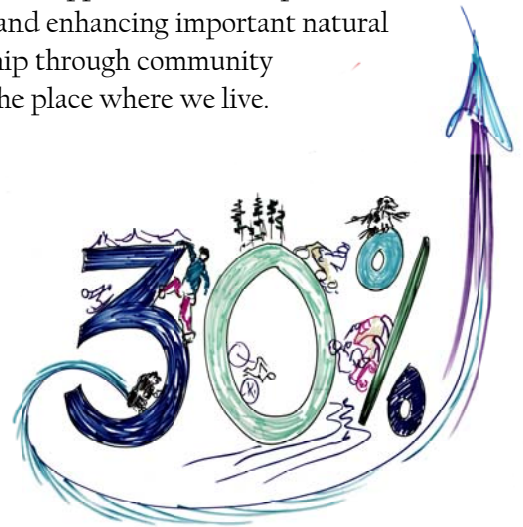
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# SUMMARY

Whitehorse's Regional Parks contribute to a healthy, resilient municipality by conserving natural assets, promoting a healthy society, and supporting sustainable prosperity. Regional Parks enhance the quality of life of residents and visitors by providing outdoor recreation facilities and opportunities to experience nature while simultaneously promoting ecological health by protecting and enhancing important natural landscapes. The Regional Parks system fosters environmental stewardship through community development and promotes a sense of responsibility and connection to the place where we live.

## How were the Regional Parks created?

In 2010, as part of the creation of a new Official Community Plan, the City created five new Regional Parks based on strong community environmental and recreational values. Together, Chadburn Lake Park, McIntyre Creek Park, Paddy's Pond / Ice Lake Park, McLean Lake Park, and Wolf Creek Park cover over 30% of the total municipal area.



The years ahead are both exciting and important. Residents have a role to play in Regional Park planning and management. Decisions we reach together will shape the landscape of Whitehorse, and impact our quality of life and the surrounding natural environments we share.

## What is the purpose of the Regional Parks Plan?

This 10 year Plan will set the future planning and management direction for the system of regional parks, and provide a decision-making framework. The Plan will be followed by an implementation schedule (2014-2015) as well as proposed individual park management plans (starting in 2015).

The Regional Parks Plan sets the tone and direction to ensure Whitehorse's Regional Parks remain healthy, beautiful and accessible for generations to come.

Lest we forget the values, features, and experiences the Regional Parks system embodies. Regional Parks represent the very reasons why so many residents choose to live, work, and play in Whitehorse: 'the Wilderness City'.

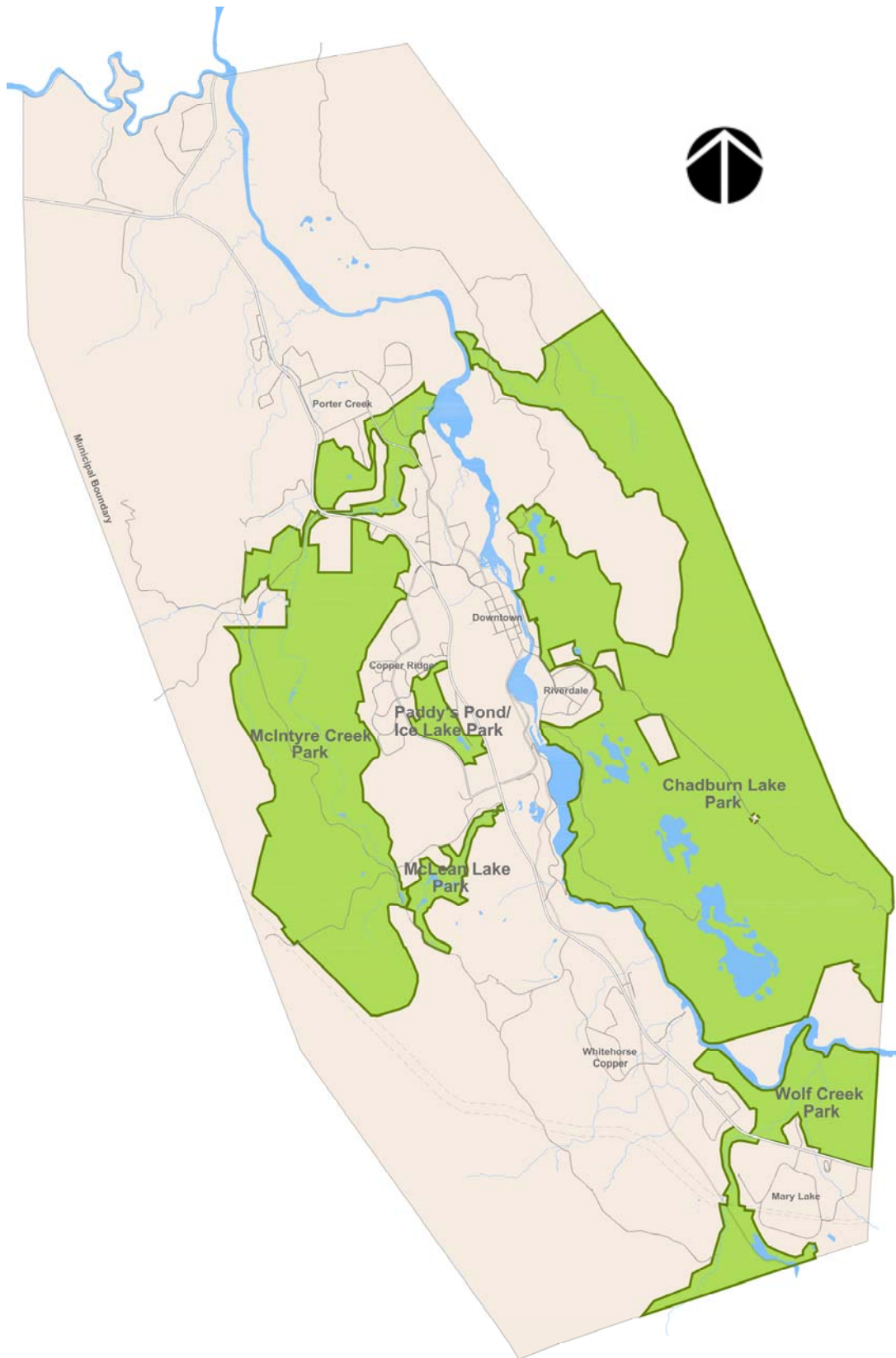


Figure 1: City of Whitehorse, Regional Parks.

The Regional Parks Plan answers the following seven **Core Questions**:

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| 1. Why are these Parks important?               | (Values-based guiding principles)           |
| 2. What do we want these Parks to be?           | (Vision)                                    |
| 3. What do we want these Parks to achieve?      | (Goals and strategies)                      |
| 4. What needs to happen first?                  | (Actions)                                   |
| 5. What would 'success' look like?              | (Outcomes)                                  |
| 6. Who will help make this Plan happen and how? | (Roles, responsibilities, and partnerships) |
| 7. How should future decisions be made?         | (Decision-making framework)                 |

## How was the Plan created?

The Regional Parks Plan is based on best practices, existing models, and public engagement. A record of public engagement can be found in the online Appendix available at [www.whitehorse.ca/planning](http://www.whitehorse.ca/planning)

## Process and timeline

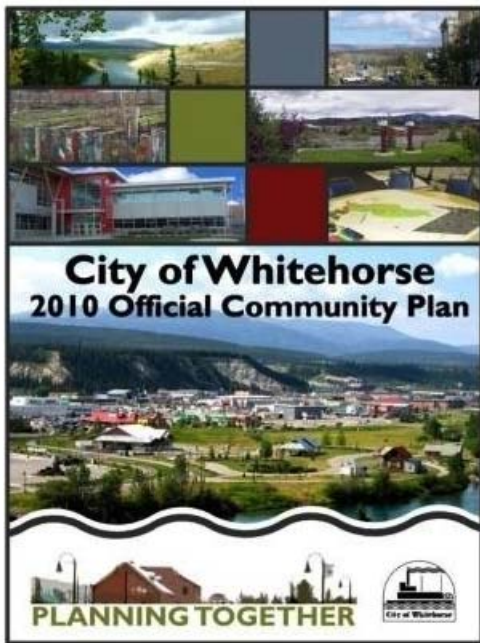
|   | Values-based Guiding Principles           | Vision | Goals and Strategies | Actions | Outcomes | Roles, Responsibilities & Partnerships | Decision Making Framework |
|---|---|--------|----------------------|---------|----------|--|---------------------------|
| Mar 11 <sup>th</sup>                          | World Café: Why are Parks important?      |        |                      |         |          |  |                           |
| Apr 7 <sup>th</sup>                           | Draft 1: Ideas and Options                |        |                      |         |          |  |                           |
| Apr 7 <sup>th</sup> - Apr 23 <sup>rd</sup>    | Workshop: What do you think?              |        |                      |         | Workshop | Workshop                               |                           |
| May 13 <sup>th</sup>                          | Draft 2: Ideas and Options                |        |                      |         |          |  |                           |
| May 13 <sup>th</sup> - May 29 <sup>th</sup>   | Open House: Did we get it right?          |        |                      |         |          |  |                           |
| June 6 <sup>th</sup>                          | Draft 3: Recommended Plan                 |        |                      |         |          |  |                           |
| June 16 <sup>th</sup> , June 23 <sup>rd</sup> | Council Introduction and Council Adoption |        |                      |         |          |  |                           |

 = Public Engagement Opportunity



# I.0 BACKGROUND

The [2010 Official Community Plan](#) (OCP) created five new parks: Chadburn Lake Park, McIntyre Creek Park, Paddy's Pond / Ice Lake Park, McLean Lake Park, and Wolf Creek Park. Section 18.1 of the OCP states: "Preservation of green spaces for environmental and recreational values is an important part of the vision of Whitehorse. To help make this vision a reality, the Green Space Network Plan shows five park areas for the future residents of Whitehorse to enjoy."



These Parks were selected based on public input, available Vacant Commissioner's Land, aerial ground imagery, existing recreational infrastructure, identified Environmentally Sensitive Areas (ESA's), and other City interests.

The City of Whitehorse offers a range of parks, such as neighbourhood playground-parks and event-parks, including Shipyards Park. The City is labelling the five new OCP parks as 'Regional Parks' given their respective size, location, and strong environmental and recreational values.

This terminology is consistent with other Canadian jurisdictions, and generally describes an area of land preserved on account of its natural beauty, historic interest, recreational use, and under the administration of a form of local government. 'Municipal' or 'urban' parks are generally more developed and may include grassed areas, gardens, and extensive facilities such as those found in Vancouver's Stanley Park.

The City's wilderness setting is one of the reasons people choose to live, work and play in Whitehorse. Not surprisingly, during the 2010 OCP process residents associated strong recreational and environmental values in these areas. The establishment of Whitehorse's Regional Parks embodies these values and will ensure future generations have access to wilderness at their doorstep. In total, about 30% of the land within the Municipal Boundary has been set-aside as Regional Park. (A further 33% has been identified as part of the wider Green Space Network Plan).

At 420 square kilometres, the City of Whitehorse has a huge amount of land for its 27,000 residents to use. The *Municipal Act* requires that the OCP be regularly reviewed. This allows for periodic re-examination of how much land to allocate to different land uses. The importance of green space to Whitehorse residents was clear in the 2010 OCP Review, and that Plan made best efforts to integrate it. At the same time, all other land uses also need to be accommodated. For this reason, future changes to the amount of land set aside for Regional Parks are likely best tackled during the next OCP Review, when the City's needs for conservation and development can be balanced together.

## 1.1 Why do we need a Regional Parks Plan?

The City needs a Regional Parks Plan for several reasons.

First, the 2010 OCP did not identify a vision for these Parks. Section 18 specifies: *“the City will work with stewards, user groups and interested residents to further define these unique areas within the City, subject to City resources”* (18.1.1, p.73). This is the starting point for the Regional Parks Plan: what do we want our Regional Parks to be and how do we get there?

Second, Whitehorse’s population is growing which adds new pressures on the landscape. Given the environmental values and ESA’s embodied by these Regional Parks, how do we balance human activities with environmental health. Regional Parks are home to natural species, historic and cultural landmarks and breathtaking landscapes that could otherwise be compromised.

Third, while Regional Park designation is new, many facilities, programs, policies and services were developed in these areas for a smaller population and many are unable to meet the increasing and changing demand for a variety of outdoor recreation experiences.

Fourth, Whitehorse’s Regional Parks have the potential to attract visitors from around the world to participate in outdoor recreation activities, contributing tourism dollars to the community and creating a variety of employment opportunities, such as guided tours.

Finally, the potential value Regional Parks can bring the wider community will be amplified through creative partnerships, such as Yukon College, First Nation governments, and community groups.

The Regional Parks Plan will provide the structure to be intentional with these places by establishing a vision, action-plan, and decision-making framework to guide future planning and management activities in Whitehorse’s five Regional Parks.

## 1.2 What is the Regional Parks Plan?

The Regional Parks Plan is a planning framework that describes how decisions will be made regarding Whitehorse’s Regional Parks. It takes into account the values and needs of residents and the important role Regional Parks play in the environmental, economic, recreational and cultural life of the City.

The Regional Parks Plan addresses the following key questions:

- 1) *Why are Regional Parks important?*
- 2) *What do we want Regional Parks to be?*
- 3) *What do we want Regional Parks to achieve?*
- 4) *What needs to happen first?*
- 5) *What does ‘success’ look like?*
- 6) *Who will help make the Regional Parks Plan happen and how?*
- 7) *How should decisions be made?*



As a response to the above questions, the Regional Parks Plan contains the follow deliverables:

- 1) A set of Guiding Principles based on community values
- 2) A Vision for Whitehorse's Regional Parks system
- 3) Goals, Strategies, and Actions
- 4) Desirable Outcomes
- 5) Roles, responsibilities, and partnerships
- 6) A Decision-Making Framework

### **1.3 How does the Regional Parks Plan connect to existing Plans?**

Although the Regional Parks Plan is a stand-alone document, it is aligned with the City's 2010 Official Community Plan, the 2009 Strategic Sustainability Plan, and other Plans. This alignment ensures that Regional Park planning and management support the City's overall strategic direction.

#### **Whitehorse Transportation Demand Management Plan (2014)**

The 2014 Whitehorse Transportation Demand Management Plan outlines strategies to more efficiently use transportation resources. The goal is to reduce the "get to work as driver" from the current 75% of trips to 50% of trips by 2036. This means as the population of Whitehorse grows, more people get to work by carpooling, walking, cycling, and taking the bus.

Regional Parks may play a role in supporting the improvement of active transportation options and encouraging proper land-use planning and development.

#### **Whitehorse Climate Change Adaptation Plan (Yukon College, 2011)**

The 2011 Whitehorse Climate Change Adaptation Plan is a planning framework that outlines long-term challenges and opportunities that climate change may bring. Of particular relevance is the increased risk of forest-fires and pests/invasive species in the Whitehorse area. Regional Parks cover over thirty percent of the total City area and therefore play a uniquely positioned to contribute towards climate change adaptation.

#### **Official Community Plan (2010)**

The 2010 OCP planning process was the genesis of the five Regional Parks and 'park' designation in the OCP is the strongest level of designation afforded the City of Whitehorse, as legislated in the *Municipal Act*. 'Park' designation is a commitment to preserve these areas as parks for future generations.

The OCP substantiates 'park' designation by providing guidance in the form of 'Recreation Areas' and 'Environmentally Sensitive Areas' as part of the Green Space Network Plan (p.31). Furthermore, the OCP stipulates the following park-specific policies:

- *Named and identified boundaries for the five parks to include natural features, recreation facilities, trails and ESA's (18.1, p.73)*
- *Prioritization of Trail Plan implementation measures shall be considered for these Park areas (18.1, p.73)*
- *The City will work with stewards, user groups and interested residents to further define these unique areas within the City, subject to City resources (18.1, p.73).*
- *The City may request that the Commissioner of the Yukon amend or remove the existing Order in Council in order to have it more accurately reflect the intended area for park preservation as shown on Map 6, and/or to have full jurisdiction and control of the park given to the City. This change to the Order in Council would open up already developed areas along the Highway for further development and protect areas that are environmentally sensitive or used for recreation (18.2, p.73)*
- *A comprehensive new management plan for the entire Chadburn Lake Park, Grey Mountain, and Long Lake area may be prepared and should emphasize the protection of the watershed and the integrity of natural and heritage features (18.3, p.73)*
- *The Hidden Lakes, Ear Lake and Chadburn Lake areas have excellent wildlife viewing potential and offer opportunities for features to be developed to encourage wildlife appreciation and education. Such features based on site-specific analysis shall be integrated with other park planning initiatives (18.4, p.73)*
- *A multi-use design philosophy, rather than single purpose, shall be considered in design and development of new public recreation facilities (18.5, p.73)*

### **Strategic Sustainability Plan (2008)**

While Regional Parks originated in the 2010 OCP, the 2008 Strategic Sustainability Plan (SSP) laid the foundation for the 2010 OCP and certainly influenced Regional Park creation. Specifically, Regional Parks can be traced directly and indirectly to the following SSP Guiding Principles:

- **Thriving Environment:** Stewardship of the natural environment and recognition of its intrinsic value and importance for quality of life.
- **Community Development:** Decisions on development, land use, infrastructure, energy and transportation shall be integrated to minimize our ecological footprint.
- **Leadership:** Long-horizon community leadership true to our principles of sustainable development and global responsibility.
- **Cultural identity:** We celebrate cultural diversity that strengthens the uniqueness of our northern community.
- **Education:** Empower every generation to entrench sustainability in education with the benefit of shared northern knowledge.

## **Parks and Recreation Master Plan (2007) and Trails Plan (2007)**

The 2007 Parks and Recreation Master Plan and 2007 Trails Plan were written before the Regional Parks were established. The Parks and Recreation Master Plan identified the need to develop a park management plan in the Chadburn Lake area. The Trails Plan outlined and prioritized the development of Whitehorse's trail network throughout the City with many trails in areas now part of Regional Parks, between 2007 and 2017.

## **Yukon River Corridor Plan (1999)**

Council adopted the Yukon River Corridor Plan in 1999 as a guiding document for future planning within the municipal boundaries of the Yukon River corridor. The overall land use and preservation goals, which were designed to guide planning for the Yukon River corridor, are reflected in the following statements:

- Respect the range of natural wilderness environments afforded by the Yukon River Corridor
- Draw people to the Yukon River to appreciate and experience the ecology, natural and human history
- Accommodate a range of outdoor and recreation activities that are compatible with the natural setting and character of the River
- Encourage land use, tourism, and recreational pursuits that complement Corridor potential and the established built environment of the City
- Blend new facilities built in the non-urban area of the Corridor with their surroundings through extensive use of natural materials to complement the environment
- Emphasize linking of green spaces to accommodate people's desires for a wilderness experience, while preserving appropriate travel Corridors for wildlife

The Yukon River Corridor Plan informed the 2010 OCP and the identification of the Green Space Network Plan and Regional Parks. Principles outlined in the Yukon River Corridor Plan are reflected in the Regional Parks Plan in a wider Yukon River valley context, and with particular attention to Chadburn Lake Park, Wolf Creek Park, and McIntyre Creek Park, which are adjacent to the Yukon River.

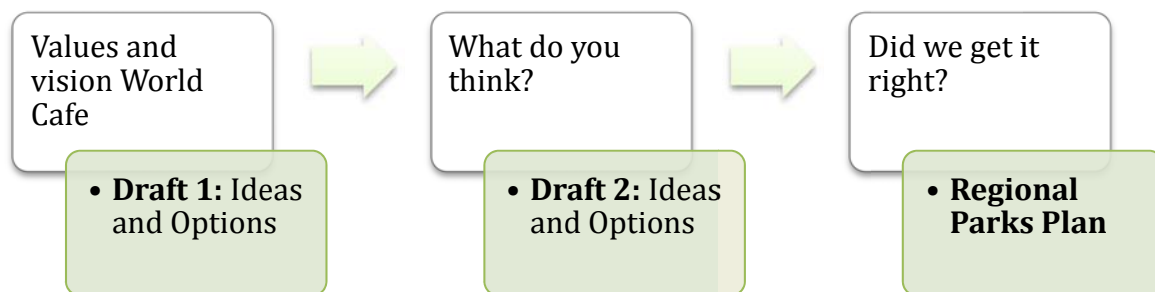




Figure 2: Chadden Lake. Source Anthony DeLorenzo.

## I.4 How was the Regional Parks Plan developed?

The Regional Parks Plan was developed based on a combination of public engagement, best practices, and existing models.



## 1.5 Where are we headed?

The passion that Whitehorse residents feel for their Regional Parks is evident in feedback received during the Regional Parks Plan and 2010 OCP processes. Their dreams and hopes for the future helped shape this plan.

We will know the Regional Parks Plan is a success if, in 10 years:

- ✓ Regional Parks are recognized and supported as an essential public good for the role they play in conservation, outdoor recreation and tourism
- ✓ Whitehorse is recognized internationally for the beauty and diversity of its landscapes and for the steps it has taken to conserve this legacy for future generations
- ✓ Parks are safe, enjoyable and accessible for residents to explore their culture and their connection to the land, and where visitors from around the world are welcome
- ✓ Aboriginal communities are engaged in the delivery of parks programs and the protection of culturally significant sites and landscapes
- ✓ Regional Parks support a variety of healthy ecosystems that, in turn, support a diversity of flora and fauna
- ✓ Whitehorse residents are proud of the modern facilities that the parks system offers
- ✓ Whitehorse has an interconnected system of parks and recreational trails that enhance quality of life for citizens by providing easy access at the neighbourhood level to nature and recreation experiences
- ✓ Regional Parks offer a variety of learning experiences that inform, inspire and involve visitors
- ✓ The public and private sectors (for-profit and not-for-profit) work together to meet the social, environmental, economic and cultural needs of our community through the Regional Parks system

## 1.6 Trends, opportunities, and challenges

Whitehorse's population growth is expected to continue growing. To accommodate future growth without further sprawl, the OCP aims to create compact, complete, healthy communities. Identifying the Green Space Network Plan and establishing Regional Parks is one part of achieving that goal. The Regional Parks Plan supports the OCP by protecting lands for recreation as well as conserving and enhancing natural features through reclamation, and community connectivity.

Past population growth and associated impacts of urban development have compromised the health and function of the City's natural environment. The key challenge of the Regional Parks Plan is to help promote municipal ecological health and maintain the health of Regional Parks while providing good access to outdoor facilities and amenities. To accomplish this, the Regional Parks Plan address the following issues:



### ➤ *Protecting the natural environment*

The natural landscapes with the municipal boundary are highly valued for their scenic beauty. Nevertheless, it is for the basics of life - their 'ecosystem services' - that our natural assets require our utmost attention. Ecosystem services include vital benefits like water purification, biodiversity, pollination, clean air, and stable, fertile soil.

A network of Regional Parks connected through the wider Green Space Network Plan is necessary in order to maintain a resilient natural system that ensures room for ecological processes to occur, allows for species movement between patches, provides opportunity for gene flow between individuals and populations, and is resilient to disease and the possible impacts of climate change. The challenge is to maintain and enhance these assets for the benefit of current and future generations while accommodating increasing population and associated urban development. The large natural areas contained in Regional Parks play an important role in maintaining regional ecosystem services. Parks also provide an important opportunity to provide public education about such topics as climate change sequestration, water filtration, biodiversity, and hydrology.

Increasing competition for use of the land also highlights the need for enforcement of the rules that guide responsible use. We need policies and resources to actively monitor the parks and enforce sizeable penalties when necessary.

### ➤ *Supporting public health, wellness and outdoor recreation*

Across North America, two trends have been identified as acting to reduce the physical and mental well being of people. The first is a dramatic rise in the number of serious health issues (e.g.: Type II diabetes and obesity) due, in part, to sedentary lifestyles. The second trend is lack of contact with and understanding of nature. Research indicates that access to green space tends to improve overall physical and mental health; therefore investing in Regional Parks is part of improving the health and wellness of residents.

Creating healthy complete communities requires, in part, providing access to a diversity of activities and experiences that encourage all people regardless of age, background or ability, to connect with their community and with nature. In a city where private outdoor space is becoming a luxury and residents highly value outdoor recreation, the City is aiming to improve quality of life for residents by providing good access to public park space close to home.

Regional Parks facilitate a range of outdoor recreation activities based on zoning bylaws, compatibility with this Regional Parks Plan, and as determined in future Regional Park-specific Management Plans.

### ➤ *Embracing creative partnerships*

Budgets are being stretched in municipalities across Canada. Partnering is increasingly a key component of the City of Whitehorse's overall operations. On occasion, the City finds that it is more efficient to enter into agreements with other organizations to operate said activity independently. These relationships are developed as required to meet unique circumstances, which emerge over time. The best way to maximize outcomes for the public is to take advantage of complementary expertise, mutual

interests, organizational capabilities, and budgets and staff resources. Fundamentally, partnerships should be embraced with the spirit of maximizing the value Regional Parks bring the wider community.

➤ *Maintaining public access while protecting the integrity of ESAs*

Regional Parks will be operated and managed in a manner that ensures reasonable public access either immediately or in the future. From a conservation perspective, some highly sensitive sites (ESAs) may provide value to the region where efforts have been made to limit human impact. In these situations the City will provide interpretation from adjacent sites or limited access under controlled circumstances.



Figure 3: Hidden Lake. Source: Flickr.com, [Creative Commons](#), Keith Williams.

## 2.0 DECISION-MAKING CONTEXT

### 2.1 The current Regional Parks system

The 2010 OCP created the Green Space Network Plan (GSNP) which covers about two thirds of the City's total area, to protect areas identified as either:

- Recreation Areas
- Environmentally Sensitive Areas
- Green 'Connections' Areas

The GSNP provided the foundation for creating the five Regional Parks, which include many natural features, recreation facilities, trails and environmentally sensitive areas. As a result, the City set aside more parkland, by percentage and by total area, than any municipality in Canada. Chadburn Lake Park is the largest park in a Canadian Municipality. Whitehorse's Regional Parks system comprises just over 30% of the total City area, or 12,655 hectares.

There are five Regional Parks within the system, offering a rich diversity of opportunity and uses while conserving natural values and features.

Whitehorse's regional parks range in size:

- |                                |                |
|--------------------------------|----------------|
| • Chadburn Lake Park           | 7,550 hectares |
| • McIntyre Creek Park          | 3,620 hectares |
| • Wolf Creek Park              | 1,100 hectares |
| • McLean Lake Park             | 195 hectares   |
| • Paddy's Pond / Ice Lake Park | 190 hectares   |

Regional Parks do not operate in isolation from other lands and neighbourhoods. They have an intricate relationship with surrounding areas. Good decision-making will depend on science, our ability to identify linkages, and understand the broader inter-relationships and impacts.

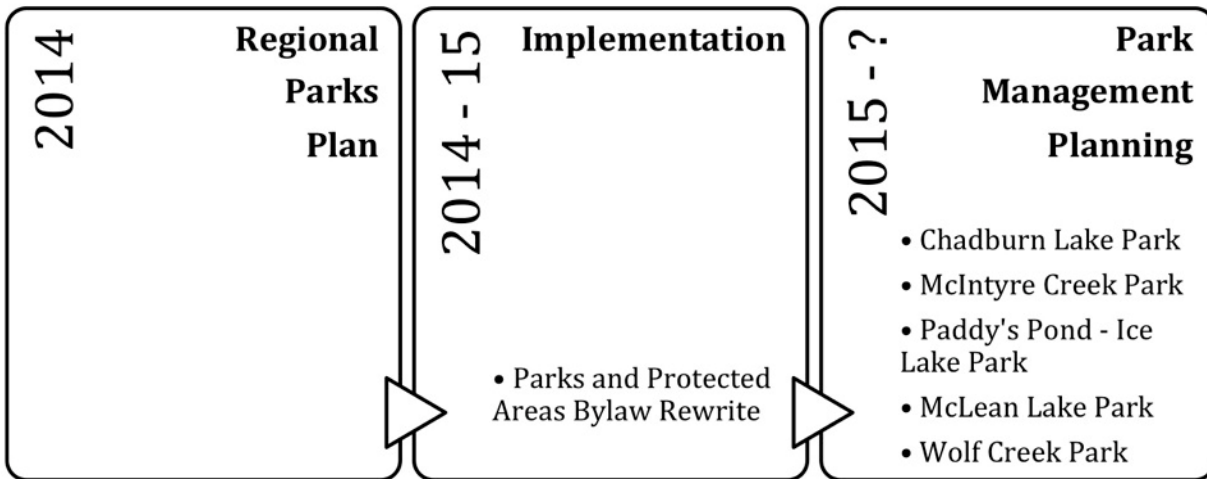
### 2.2 Systems planning approach

A modified 'systems planning' approach will be used to develop one Regional Parks Plan for the five Regional Parks. This is a common approach in park planning and used across Canada in various forms. The systems planning approach offers a practical and holistic way of looking at the entire regional parks network in a wider context by:

- Taking a holistic view of parks and how they work together to achieve goals
- Providing both natural environments for conservation and recreation, and possibly other values

- Facilitates ‘raising the gaze’ to view the big picture at the system level
- Increases efficiency by reducing planning duplication

The Regional Parks Plan is the first step towards park management planning by providing high-level direction. Future management planning will explore park-specific elements. Just as the OCP guides neighbourhood planning, so too shall the Regional Parks Plan guide park management planning. Like the OCP, the Regional Parks Plan will provide broad direction for Regional Parks.



The direction set out in the Regional Parks Plan will determine the Implementation Schedule's goals. The City will start the Parks and Protected Areas Bylaw Rewrite process based on direction provided by the Regional Parks Plan.

Council has expressed interest in starting park-specific management planning in 2015. The most likely scenario is that Council dedicates resources towards the development of one park management plan, or possibly two, as a pilot. No commitments have been made.

## 2.3 Current roles and responsibilities

The City of Whitehorse is the administrator of Regional Parks. The Planning Services Department is leading the Regional Parks Plan process, in close collaboration with Outreach and Events (which leads trail planning). Other Departments with key interests include: Environmental Sustainability, Bylaw Services, and Parks and Trails (park and trail management). The involvement of five Departments is to ensure consistency and continuity of the Regional Parks Plan as it relates to other City activities and commitments.



## 2.4 Honouring and working with First Nations

The City of Whitehorse recognizes and acknowledges that First Nation people have a long history of use in these Regional Park areas. These spaces and places have been used for generations as seasonal homes and places for fishing and hunting. The City of Whitehorse recognizes the constitutionally protected rights of First Nation peoples, and the unique relationship that First Nation communities have with the land.

While the City has the legislative mandate to manage Regional Park, it also has a duty to consult with First Nation communities where decisions may adversely impact their constitutionally protected Treaty rights and First Nation rights. The goal is to reach a meaningful balance that respects the rights of First Nation communities and the interests of all Whitehorse residents.

In addition to respecting their constitutional rights, the City values the unique perspective that First Nation communities offer. The City will make special efforts to reach out to First Nation communities to encourage participation in Regional Park planning and management. The City will also explore the possible development and delivery of interpretive activities in partnership with the First Nation community.



Figure 4: Chadburn Lake. Source: Flickr.com, [Creative Commons](#), Bruce Barrett.



# 3.0 DECISION-MAKING FRAMEWORK

## 3.1 Values-based guiding principles

### Core question 1:

Why are these parks important?

Many decisions will be made along the way to achieving the City's vision for Regional Parks. Guiding Principles help us to navigate an increasingly complex decision-making environment where needs are diverse and sometimes competing. Guiding Principles form the foundation for the decision-making criteria that will orient Regional Park planning and management, and are based on the values heard at the March 11<sup>th</sup>, 2014 World Café and refined at the April 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2014 workshop.



Figure 5: Regional Parks values, illustrated by Donald Watt.

## 1. Thriving Environment

- Co-existence: → We recognize that humans and other species share Regional Parks and adjacent areas
- Education: → Through related programs, we strive to inform, inspire and involve residents and visitors, and to increase understanding, respect, and connection to nature
- Integrity: → The City will protect and improve ecological health and resilience
- Stewardship: → The City will work with all citizens to responsibly care for and manage Whitehorse's Regional Parks system

## 2. Vibrant Citizen and Community Development

- Citizen Engagement: → Whitehorse residents have opportunities for meaningful input into a decision-making process that is inclusive and transparent
- Collaboration & partnerships: → Through collaboration and partnerships with citizens, neighborhoods, communities of interest, the private sector and other governments, we increase value and achieve common goals
- Health & Wellness: → Regional Parks support emotional, mental, physical, and spiritual health and wellness
- Heritage: → Regional Parks contain places with high cultural heritage value
- Outdoor Recreation: → Regional Parks provide the spaces and places for a range of outdoor recreation opportunities and experiences which enhance our connection to nature
- Sustainable Prosperity: → Regional Park decisions reflect a commitment to wider community environmental, social, and economic sustainability

## 3. Excellence in Planning and Management

- Accountability: → Milestones and deliverables are established and Whitehorse residents receive timely information about progress in achieving desired Outcomes
- Improvement & innovation: → We seek to improve our Regional Parks system by proactively monitoring, evaluating and implementing innovative parks management strategies
- Collaborate with First Nations: → The City will strive to collaborate with First Nations in areas of mutual interest
- Integrated management: → Park management decisions consider the combined impacts of environmental, social and economic factors
- Knowledge-based decision-making: → Decision-making is informed by natural science, social science, local knowledge, and traditional First Nations knowledge
- Leadership: → Regional Park management and operations demonstrate environmental leadership and showcase best practices in energy and water efficiency, environmental design, construction practices and products
- Respectful & responsive: → The City respects and responds to the diverse needs of residents and visitors

## 3.2 Vision statement

### Core question 2:

What do we  
want these  
parks to be?

The following draft vision statement is based on the results of the April 23<sup>rd</sup> workshop and accompanying online survey where participants shared their thoughts on the draft Vision statement options:

“The vision for Whitehorse Regional Parks are places and spaces that inspire and motivate current and future residents and visitors to discover, enjoy, and value the natural world through outdoor recreation; that protect the integrity of its ecosystems and biodiversity; and that provide the foundation of Whitehorse’s unique wilderness character and quality of life.”

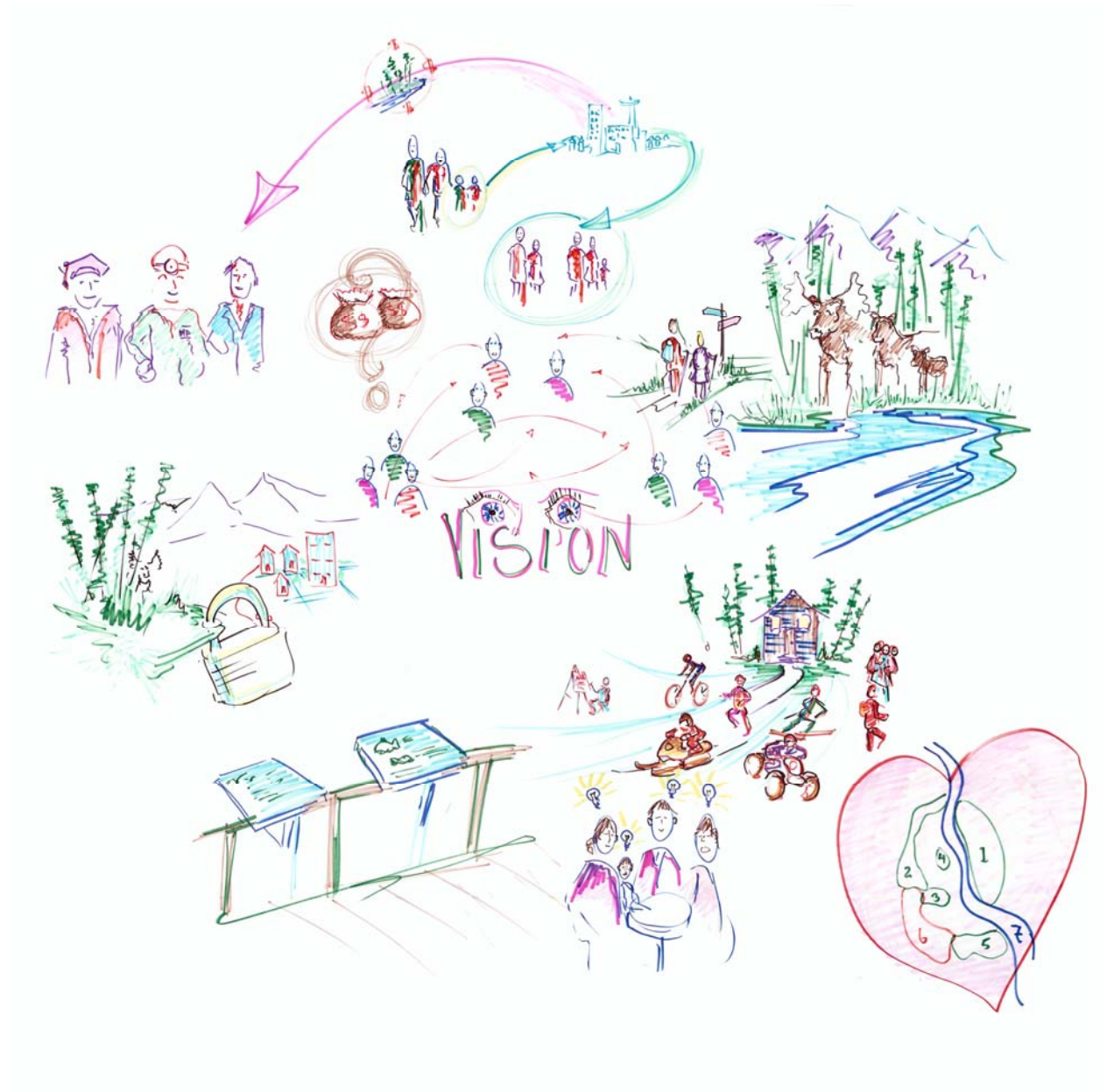


Figure 6: Regional Parks vision, illustrated by Donald Watt.

### 3.3 Goals, strategies, and actions

#### Core question 3:

What do we want  
these parks to  
achieve?

#### Core question 4:

What needs to  
happen first?

The following Goals, Strategies, and Actions are ideas based on the results of the April 23<sup>rd</sup> public engagement workshop, external models, and best practices. The Regional Parks Plan is a commitment that the City, in collaboration with its partners, will accomplish these Goals, Strategies, and Actions within the Regional Parks system.

Important notes while reviewing the Goals, Strategies, and Actions:

- The Goal number does not reflect an order of priority
- Each Action will be further defined with clear milestones and deliverables during the Implementation schedule (see pg. 28). The date of completion will vary, depending on the scope and nature of the initiative, as well as available resources



Figure 7: Regional Parks Plan, illustrated by Donald Watt.



Goals were derived from the Values-Based Guiding Principles as follows:

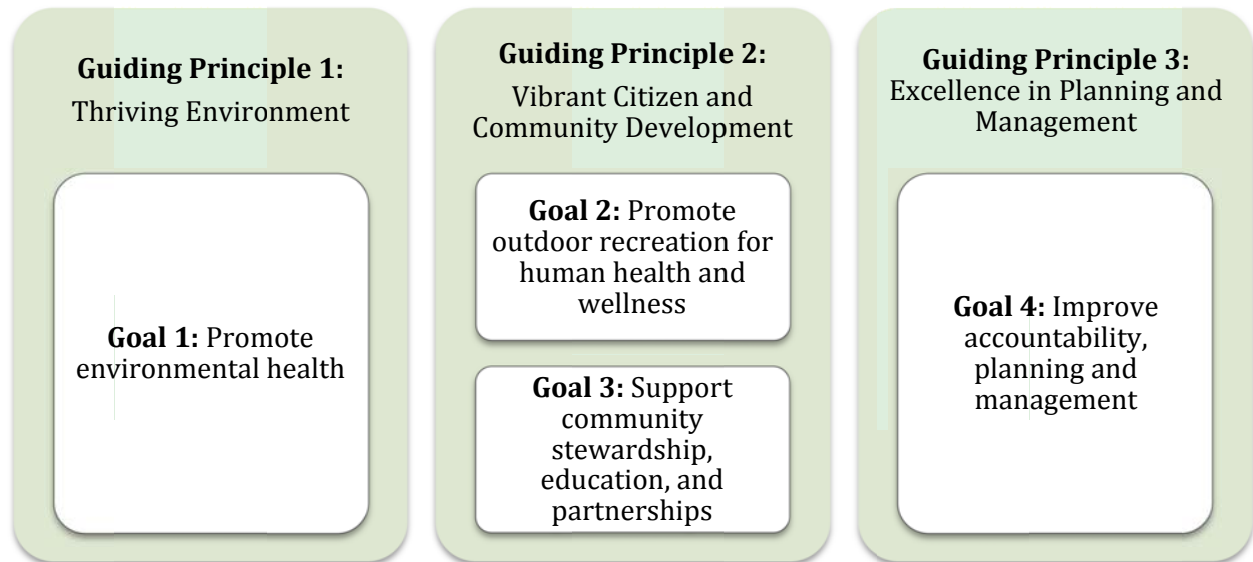


Figure 8: Riding under the midnight sun. Source: Anthony DeLorenzo.



## Goal 1: Promote environmental health

| Strategies: |   | Actions:<br><i>The City, with the help of partners, will...</i> |   |
|-------------|---|---|---|
| 1.1         | Protect and improve ecological health of Regional Parks   | 1.1.1   | Complete sensitive ecosystem inventory mapping for Regional Parks and adjacent lands, and create a mapping catalogue of habitats and corridors in the municipality with high ecological value.  |
|             |   | 1.1.2   | Pursue ongoing monitoring.  |
|             |   | 1.1.3   | Explore 'Limits of Acceptable Change' as a tool to help understand and describe ecological character.   |
|             |   | 1.1.4   | Identify damaged and debilitated ecosystems within Regional Parks and implement conservation activities and projects to restore and enhance ecological health.  |
|             |   | 1.1.5   | Pursue a more permanent process to regulate motor boat-use in Regional Parks.   |
|             |   | 1.1.6   | Work with other governments including First Nations to consider connectivity of natural systems that cross boundaries.  |
| 1.2         | Improve trail and facility location, design, development, and maintenance to minimize environmental degradation | 1.2.1   | Develop and maintain inventories of physical, historical and natural assets to support sustainable park use and natural resource planning.  |
|             |   | 1.2.2   | Limit public access to sites that are too environmentally sensitive for human use while seeking ways to provide alternative viewing opportunities including, re-routing trails, off-site interpretation, and education opportunities. |
| 1.3         | Protect Regional Parks from natural disturbances  | 1.3.1   | Conduct a natural disturbance risk analysis and explore reduction measures including forest fires and pest management.  |
|             |   | 1.3.2   | Seek ways in which Regional Parks can support the Whitehorse Climate Change Adaptation Plan.  |

## Goal 2: Promote outdoor recreation for human health and wellness

| Strategies: |  | Actions:<br><i>The City, with the help of partners, will...</i> |   |
|-------------|--|---|---|
| 2.1         | Provide safe and sustainable options for various forms of outdoor recreation, ranging from multi-use to single-use facilities and trails | 2.1.1   | Give high priority to the replacement and upgrading of facilities that are now reaching the end of their useful life.   |
|             |  | 2.1.2   | Increase system capacity by identifying lands with high outdoor recreation potential.   |
|             |  | 2.1.3   | Embrace simplicity to reduce cost and maintenance.  |
|             |  | 2.1.4   | Upgrade and develop facilities, trails, and associated infrastructure where needed to accommodate neighborhood locations, and changing demographics and preferences while maintaining ecological integrity. |
| 2.2         | Facilitate inclusion to enhance user experiences   | 2.2.1   | Implement an inclusion strategy to increase opportunities for, and invite full participation of, all residents where feasible.  |
|             |  | 2.2.2   | Increase universal access to park facilities through implementation of an incremental barrier removal strategy including use of accessible design approaches and re-fits wherever possible.                 |
| 2.3         | Promote the physical and mental health and wellness benefits of Regional Parks and outdoor recreation                                    | 2.3.1   | Develop and deliver a communication and education strategy to promote physical and mental health benefits of parks and outdoor recreation in the City's Active Living Guide                                 |
|             |  | 2.3.2   | Collaborate with a broad range of partners to expand opportunities, programs and services within Regional Parks that promote physical activity, social interaction and healthy lifestyle choices.           |
|             |  | 2.3.3   | Develop relationships with health authorities and social service agencies to incorporate the health benefits of parks into public policy, programs and research.  |
|             |  | 2.3.4   | Seek ways in which Regional Parks can support the Whitehorse Transportation Demand Management Plan.   |

### Goal 3: Support community stewardship, education, and partnerships

| Strategies: |   | Actions:<br><i>The City, with the help of partners, will...</i> |  |
|-------------|---|---|--|
| 3.1         | Increase opportunities for citizen, visitor and organization involvement  | 3.1.1   | Engage, train, and support organizations and individual volunteers to design, develop and implement effective stewardship activities such as habitat restoration, heritage restoration, species recovery, and other activities aligned with the Regional Parks Plan. |
|             |   | 3.1.2   | Integrate low-impact eco-tourism and voluntourism strategies into facility and program planning, development and operations, as consistent with park settings, the City's sustainability goals, and the Regional Parks Plan.   |
| 3.2         | Provide education programs to foster stewardship, health and wellness, personal safety and social responsibility  | 3.2.1   | Develop or adopt programs with emphasis on children, youth and under-represented demographic groups such as new Canadians.   |
|             |   | 3.2.2   | Offer educational programs such as bear and dog awareness, backcountry safety, dressing for weather, and recreating with a partner(s) to promote safe outdoor recreation.  |
|             |   | 3.2.3   | Educate dog-owners about relevant by-laws and explore ways to mitigate dog-waste at busy entry – exit locations  |
|             |   | 3.2.4   | Explore volunteer trail and habitat steward, guided recreation activity, and BioBlitz programs.  |
|             |   | 3.2.5   | Adopt and communicate the principles of Leave No Trace.  |
|             |   | 3.2.6   | Improve existing and develop new interpretation of natural and human history.  |
|             |   | 3.2.7   | Develop a central online repository for information.   |
|             |   | 3.2.8   | Explore ways to connect local citizen scientists   |
| 3.3         | Seek partnerships to deliver new and existing programs and provide special facilities where others have expertise | 3.3.1   | Identify potential enhancements to services and programs consistent with park setting and municipal goals, and seek partnerships with the private sector and other public sector entities.   |
|             |   | 3.3.2   | Partner with and give recognition to non-profit societies to provide and maintain appropriate specialized facilities and programs in Regional Parks, where this is preferable to the use of public funds.  |
|             |   | 3.3.3   | Partner with educational institutions to use Regional Parks for research, curriculum instruction and occupational training.  |
| 3.4         | Encourage philanthropy to support programming and facilities  | 3.4.1   | Explore the development of a Foundation to better enable private citizens and corporations to donate money and gifts-in-kind to the Regional Parks system and nurture a stewardship ethic among citizens.  |
|             |   | 3.4.2   | Develop an annual set of priorities for projects and programs for consideration for fundraising by philanthropic organizations.  |

## Goal 4: Improve accountability, planning, and management

| Strategies: |   | Actions:<br><i>The City, with the help of partners, will...</i> |   |
|-------------|---|---|---|
| 4.1         | Engage First Nations                                      | 4.1.1   | Build relationships with First Nation communities to identify, inventory and protect significant cultural and traditional-use sites within Regional Parks, and to collaborate on initiatives of mutual interest.          |
| 4.2         | Develop a process for nominating new Regional Park areas  | 4.2.1   | Develop a clear process and set of criteria for residents to nominate new Regional Parks or the expansion of existing Regional Parks.   |
| 4.3         | Further entrench Regional Parks and adjacent lands        | 4.3.1   | Ensure that Regional Parks and the Green Space Network Plan are better integrated into the Land Use Designations map in the next OCP.   |
| 4.4         | Foster evidence-based decision-making                     | 4.4.1   | Develop a strategy that facilitates natural and social science, as well as local and traditional knowledge by the academic community, City staff, volunteers, First Nations and others to inform planning and management. |
|             |   | 4.4.2   | Use the City's Bi-Annual Citizen Survey   |
| 4.5         | Ensure accountability through milestones and deliverables | 4.5.1   | Develop a set of key themes and indicators to provide strategic management direction and measure progress linked to specific goals and outcomes.  |
|             |   | 4.5.2   | Communicate information to help residents better understand the Regional Parks system and track progress of initiatives.  |
| 4.6         | Embrace current planning and management practices         | 4.6.1   | Practice the concept of Adaptive Management.  |
|             |   | 4.6.2   | Practice participatory planning.  |
|             |   | 4.6.3   | Continue to provide uniformed operating staff at Regional Park sites with broad roles including maintenance and regulatory compliance.  |
|             |   | 4.6.4   | Incorporate carbon sequestration strategies into park plans whenever appropriate.   |
|             |   | 4.6.5   | Develop a City parks classification system so that residents can easily understand which recreation and conservation activities are supported in each park and why.   |
|             |   | 4.6.6   | Review the Parks and Protected Areas Bylaw.   |
|             |   | 4.6.7   | Develop Park Management Plans for the five Regional Parks including establishing activity zones appropriate to different environmental areas.   |

4.6.8 Develop a set of criteria for commercial operations that considers fair process, public access, low-impact design, and tenure; align with forthcoming 'Private Use of Public Spaces Policy'.

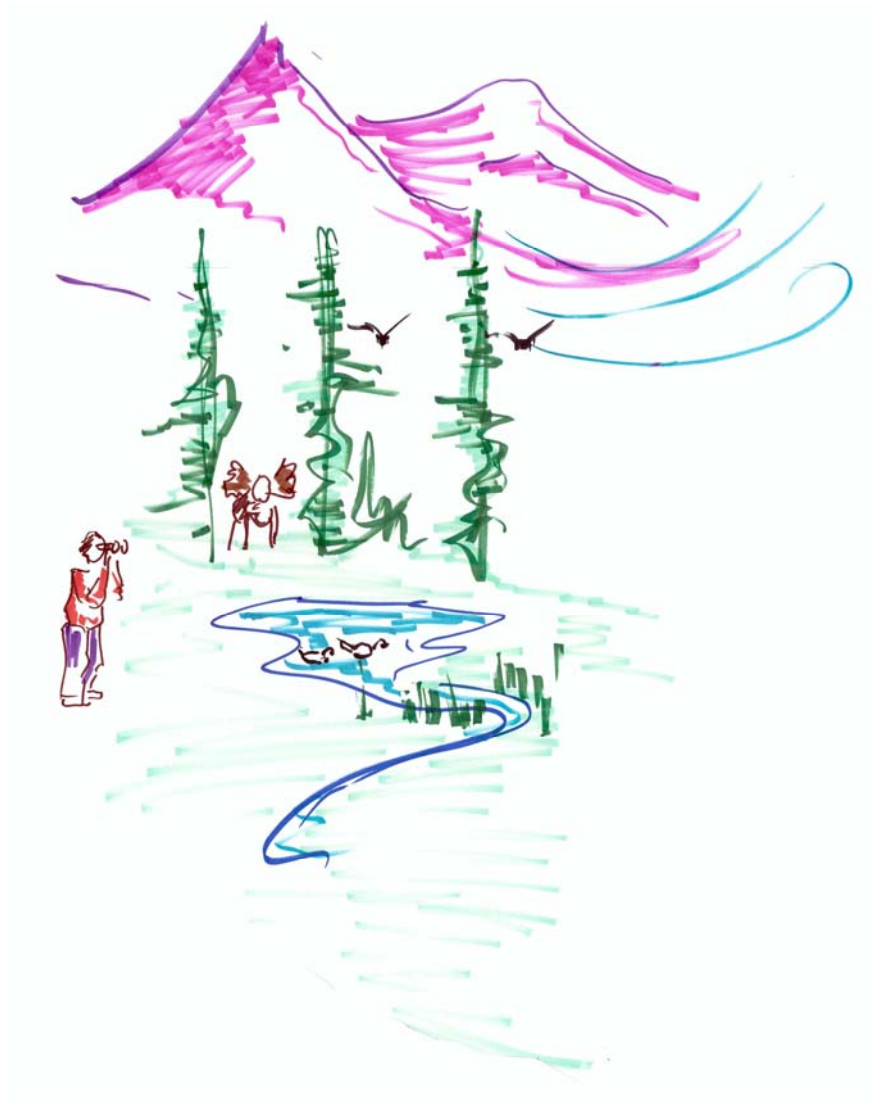
4.6.9 Explore place-making concept to create better connections between people and places.

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4.7 Determine priorities and seek internal capacity

4.7.1 Determine costs, timelines, and priorities to Regional Parks Plan Actions during the Implementation Schedule.

4.7.2 Explore need to build internal capacity to lead, promote, coordinate, and implement the Regional Parks Plan.





## 3.4 Outcomes

### Core question 5:

What does  
'success' look like?

The City and its partners will need to work together to implement improvements to the Regional Parks system. The ability to successfully complete the Regional Parks Plan will be based on whether we achieve the following Outcomes:

#### 1. Healthy ecosystems and environment: *performance measured by...*

- 1.1. Quality of ecosystems and biodiversity
- 1.2. No net-loss of flora or fauna
- 1.3. Quality trails and facilities designed and maintained to minimize environmental impact
- 1.4. Total Regional Park system area has not decreased
- 1.5. Users follow a high level of trail-use compliance
- 1.6. Users adopt the principles of Leave No Trace principles
- 1.7. Green Connections are considered between Regional Parks in planning and management
- 1.8. All Regional Parks have effective Park Management Plans in place
- 1.9. Representation of key landscapes, ecological features and sensitive ecosystems

#### 2. People-friendly communities and recreational opportunities: *performance measured by...*

- 2.1. Diverse, enjoyable outdoor recreation opportunities that contribute to healthy lifestyles
- 2.2. High level of sustainable outdoor recreation participation rates by all residents
- 2.3. Condition of park assets, such as trails, facilities, and web-based infrastructure
- 2.4. Opportunities to learn about, appreciate, and care for natural and cultural heritage
- 2.5. Accessible and up-to-date information
- 2.6. Number of volunteers and the outcomes they achieve
- 2.7. Progress on removing barriers to participation so all residents may enjoy Regional Parks

### 3. Sustainable prosperity supported by our Regional Parks: *performance measured by...*

- 3.1. Citizens recognize and value Regional Parks as public assets that define our community's wilderness character and lead to a higher quality of life
- 3.2. Quantity and quality of sustainable, nature-based experiences for residents and visitors that contribute to the economic and social fabric of Whitehorse
- 3.3. Visitors recognize Whitehorse as a desirable nature-based tourism destination that contributes to diversifying the local economy and provides economic benefits to the City, the private sector, not-for-profits and community groups
- 3.4. Connections to City-wide trail, active commuting, and transit networks
- 3.5. Conduits for partnerships and strengthened relationships between citizens, organizations and First Nation, Territorial and Federal governments
- 3.6. Regional Parks planned and managed within existing resources
- 3.7. Planning and management activities follow best practices

## 3.5 Roles, responsibilities, and partnerships

### Core question 6:

**Who will make  
this plan happen,  
and how?**

The City of Whitehorse is and will continue to be the lead administrator of Regional Parks. Planning and management will be the responsibility of various City Departments.

The City has traditionally focused its recreation efforts on providing or supporting facilities for active sports with nature-based outdoor recreation making up an important but minor portion of City services (namely through trails and classes). Similarly, the City has also traditionally played a small role with respect to habitat and biodiversity conservation.

The Green Space Network Plan, which formed the basis of the five Regional Parks, was the first major citywide land conservation planning initiative. The Regional Parks Plan recognizes the need for greater internal connections and commitments to advance the outdoor recreation, environmental stewardship and conservation opportunities afforded through the Regional Parks system.

To be successful in fulfilling the Vision, Goals, Strategies, Actions, and Outcomes outlined in the Regional Parks Plan, the City recognizes the fundamental need to creatively partner with a variety of organizations so that capacity and resources may be identified and pooled towards mutual interests embodied by Regional Parks. *We are only limited by our willingness to be creative!*

*The City recognizes that allocating resources towards partnership-development is a good use of public funds and a best practice.* Accordingly, the City will seek partnerships with various organizations, governments, and individuals who will contribute towards developing, maintaining and sustaining Regional Parks.

Potential partners may include, but are not limited to:

- Interested citizens
- Kwanlin Dün First Nation
- Ta'an Kwäch'än Council
- Yukon Government
- Government of Canada
- RCMP
- Air and Army Cadets
- Yukon College
- Schools
- Conservation organizations
- Neighbourhood Associations
- Non-governmental organizations
- Community organizations
- Youth organizations
- Service clubs
- Tourism authorities
- Recreation interest groups
- Businesses
- Visitors

The Roles, Responsibilities, and Partnerships answers the sixth Core Questions: **who will help make this Plan happen and how?**



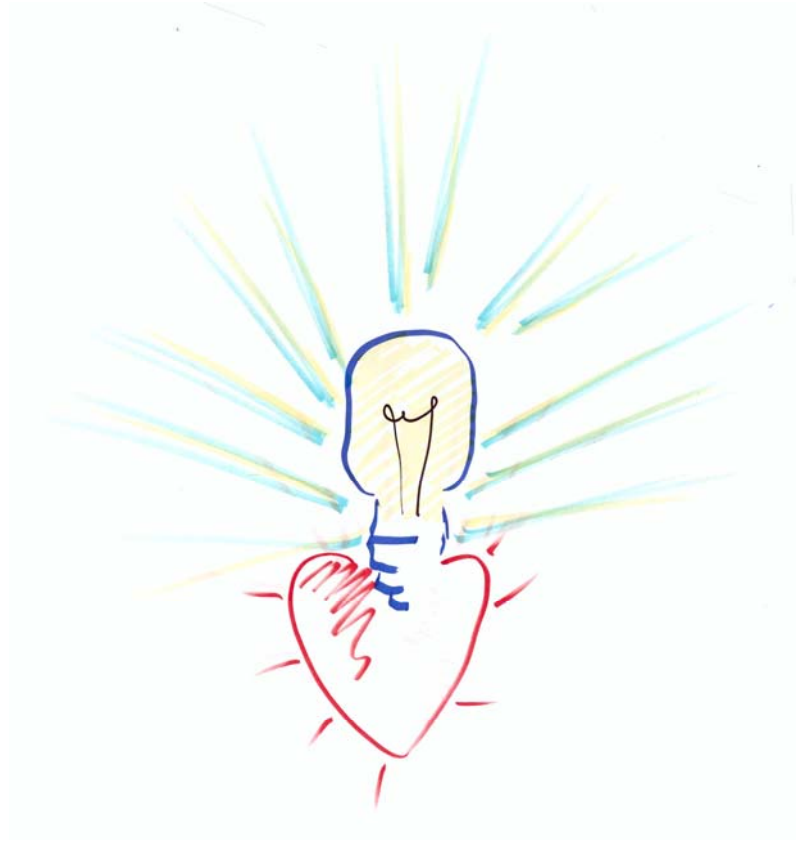
Figure 9: Public consultation events. Source: John Glynn-Morris.

### 3.6 Decision-making framework

#### Core question 7:

How should  
future decisions  
be made?

Section 1.0 is the full Decision-Making Framework, complete with Values-based Guiding Principles, a Vision, Goals, Strategies and Actions, Outcomes, and Roles, Responsibilities and Partnerships. This Decision-making Framework will provide the foundation for future park-specific Management Planning. Final decision making authority rests with City Council.



## 4.0 GLOSSARY

**Adaptive Management:** a dynamic management approach which uses the best science or information available to write and implement policies and practices then monitors and makes changes as necessary to achieve the desired outcome. Through monitoring, assessment and collaboration with partners, planning and management activities continue to adapt in response to new information and employ the 'precautionary principle' to ensure the ecological and cultural values are not compromised.

**Access:** Allowing or enabling entry, approach or use of an area.

**BioBlitz:** An intense period of biological surveying in an attempt to record all living species within a designated area and build public interest in biodiversity. Groups of scientists, naturalists and volunteers conduct an intensive field study over a continuous time period (often 24 hours).

**Biodiversity:** The assortment of life on earth including the variety of genetic material in all living things, the variety of species on earth and the various kinds of living communities and the environments in which they all occur.

**Carbon Sequestration:** A process of capture and long-term storage of atmospheric carbon dioxide.

**Conservation:** The responsible preservation, management and care of our land and of our natural resources.

**Ecological Integrity:** Ecosystems have integrity when they have their native components (plants, animals and other organisms) and processes (such as growth and reproduction) intact.

**Ecosystems:** The interaction between all organisms (including humans) and their physical environment. Ecosystem health/integrity refers to the adequate structure and functioning of an ecosystem, as described by scientific information and societal priorities.

**Economic:** Relating to the wealth of an individual, business, community or a nation.

**Environment:** The components of the earth – including air, land, water, all layers of the atmosphere, all organic and inorganic matter and living organism, and all of their interacting natural systems.

**Environmentally Sensitive Areas:** ESA's are determined to have high wildlife values and high environmental sensitivity, where protection of natural areas, wildlife habitat, and ecological values is ensured. Community enjoyment of these areas is encouraged and balanced with minimal disturbance, development, or intervention. Trails, interpretation, research and education are permitted in these ESA's.

**Facility:** Could include campgrounds, picnic sites, buildings, visitor centres, staging areas, water and sewer systems, and all other infrastructure that could support park visitor experiences.

**Inclusion:** Ensuring facilities and programs are designed so that everyone's needs are considered regardless of age, ability or disability, economic standing or other factors.



**Integrated Management:** Integrated Management, also known as Integrated Natural Resource Management (INRM), is a process of managing natural resources in a systematic way, which includes multiple aspects of natural resource use meet production goals of producers and other direct users as well as goals of the wider community. Integrated Management combines research in diverse areas such as sustainable land use, participatory planning, integrated watershed management, and adaptive management.

**Land:** The entire complex of surface attributes including air, water, and the solid portions of the earth.

**Leave No Trace:** A set of outdoor ethics designed to promote conservation in the outdoors, and the not-for profit organization that teaches those principles.

**Natural heritage:** The geological features and landforms, associated biodiversity, and ecosystem functions of a defined area.

**Park land:** Land set aside from disposition as public park area.

**Regional Park:** Includes five new City of Whitehorse parks as identified in the 2010 OCP.

**Recreation:** All those things that a person or group chooses to do in order to make their leisure time more interesting, more enjoyable and more personally satisfying.

**Stewardship:** An ethic whereby citizens, industry, communities and governments work together to responsibly care for and manage Whitehorse's natural resources and environment.

**Trail:** A path with a rough beaten or dirt / stone surface used for travel.

**Trail Steward:** A commonly used program by parks and municipalities to allow volunteers to contribute towards the planning, design, development, and maintenance of trails.

**Watershed:** The extent of land where surface water from rain and melting snow or ice converges to a single point at a lower elevation, usually the exit of the basin, where the waters join another water body, such as a river.

## 5.0 ONLINE APPENDIX

The complete Appendix can be found on the City website at [www.whitehorse.ca/regionalparks](http://www.whitehorse.ca/regionalparks). It includes all public input received during the Regional Parks planning process and answers to Frequently Asked Questions.