

Environmental Guidelines for Urban and Rural Land Development in British Columbia



Municipal and regional parks can make significant contributions to community greenspace and wildlife habitat. This fact sheet provides information on ways to maximize these benefits.

There are many guidelines that can be followed to protect environmental values during the design, construction and maintenance of parks. These are described in more detail in *Develop with Care 2014: Environmental Guidelines for Urban and Rural Land Development in British Columbia*.

Municipal and regional parks include many types of landscapes: from ballfields and children's playgrounds to natural areas. The environmental benefits—or impacts—from parks vary according to the type of park. By keeping parks as natural as possible, fish and wildlife habitats are protected and visitors are given an enjoyable and pleasurable experience.

BALLFIELDS AND PLAYGROUNDS

Reduce water wastage

- ☑ Design playing fields to minimize irrigation needs, for example using drought-tolerant grasses.
- ☑ Set up highly efficient irrigation systems. For more information see www.irrigationbc.com

Create and maintain wildlife habitat

- ☑ Enhance areas around smaller ballfields and playgrounds with native plantings. Native plants will require little maintenance (once established) and will provide food sources for local wildlife and high value edge habitats for many bird species. Smaller ballfields surrounded by natural screening will help to discourage use by geese and other problem wildlife.
- ☑ Top hazard trees at 3–5 m or higher rather than completely removing them. This creates a standing dead snag, a food source for a variety of bird species and potential nesting sites for owls and other wildlife.

- ☑ Maintain turf in good condition to minimize weed invasions.
- ☑ Use integrated pest management approaches. Avoid, or minimize, the use of pesticides or other chemicals that can harm local wildlife or pollute waterways.
- ☑ Avoid, or minimize, the use of pressure treated lumber, which contains toxics that can leach into the soil or nearby waterways.
- ☑ Minimize the amount of impervious surfaces and compacted soils, allowing rainwater to soak into the ground and replenish ground water supplies.
- ☑ Establish setbacks and measures for trails consistent with the [Riparian Areas Regulation](#) methods.

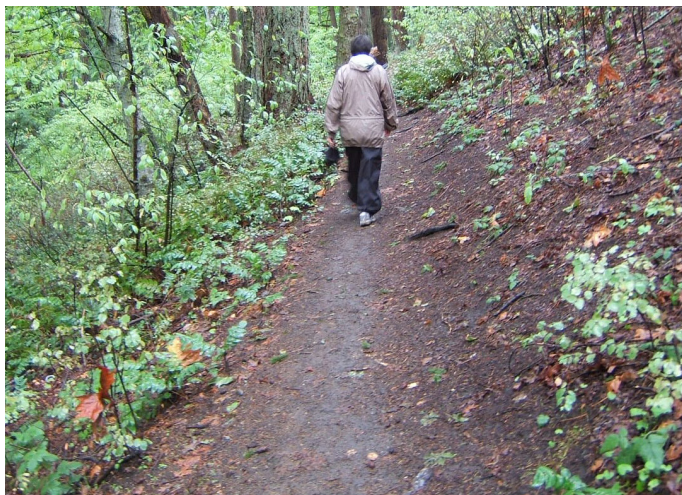
Avoid undesirable human-wildlife encounters

- ☑ Avoid planting species that attract bears, or deer (which in some areas may attract cougar). Keep plantings low and open to avoid creating hiding places for undesirable wildlife.
- ☑ Use garbage containers that are resistant to local wildlife, such as bears, racoons and crows.
- ☑ Require that dogs be kept on a leash or under close control outside established leash-free zones.
- ☑ Never let dogs chase wildlife.

NATURAL PARKS

Design trails carefully

- ☑ Place trails near the edges of parks rather than through the centre. Maintaining a large undisturbed area in the centre of the park creates safe habitat for shyer species that prefer to avoid humans.
- ☑ Do not build trails in areas of high environmental sensitivity (e.g., close to heron nesting areas or streams). Discourage the use of existing trails in sensitive areas by decommissioning these trails, placing downed wood across the trail, and by using interpretive signage.



Create narrow, well-defined trails

- ☑ Keep trails as narrow as possible to limit the amount of space used. Create well-defined trails that encourage people to stay on the designated path.
- ☑ Use narrow boardwalks in damp areas, rather than fill which destroys wetland habitats.
- ☑ If stream crossings are required, use clear-span bridges rather than culverts. This helps to protect fish habitats.

Protect wildlife habitats

- ☑ If hazard trees have to be removed for public safety reasons, top them at 3–5 m or higher and leave the stump as a wildlife tree.
- ☑ Leave dead trees and large branches on the ground to rot in place. Downed wood habitat provides habitat for salamanders and small birds.
- ☑ Maintain shrubby vegetation that is used by small birds for nesting and as cover.
- ☑ Maintain riparian vegetation (ground cover as well as trees and shrubs). These areas provide important wildlife habitats for feeding and breeding.
- ☑ Create well-defined, limited access to streams, lakes and coastal shorelines at key locations rather than a trail along the entire shoreline. Children and dogs that play in the streams can inadvertently destroy fish spawning and bird nesting habitats.
- ☑ Keep beach areas small. Public access to shorelines destroys and disturbs bird nesting habitat, and the sand in the water supports very few fish or other aquatic species. Obtain permits from Fisheries and Oceans Canada and Ministry of Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Operations before creating beach areas.
- ☑ Find ways to 'connect' the park to other greenspaces, for example along riparian corridors or through treed boulevards. Small parks can make significant contributions to a network of wildlife habitats.

For more information see:

Develop with Care 2014: Environmental Guidelines for Urban and Rural Land Development in British Columbia and other Guideline documents <http://www.env.gov.bc.ca/wld/BMP/bmpintro.html>

Riparian Areas Regulation: http://www.env.gov.bc.ca/habitat/fish_protection_act/riparian/riparian_areas.html