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Preliminary National Park Reserve Concept for Bowen Island

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First Nations consultation is currently underway, and upon completion, input will be incorporated into the preliminary concept.

Introduction

National parks are a country-wide system of natural areas of Canadian significance. They are gateways to nature, to adventure, to discovery, to solitude. They celebrate, protect and present the natural heritage of our country. National parks provide havens, not only for plants and animals, but also for the human spirit, a place to wander... to wonder... to discover yourself.

Parks Canada is known internationally as the manager of one of the finest systems of national parks in the world. In 2010, Parks Canada celebrated the 125th anniversary of Canada's first national park at Banff. The celebration continues through 2011, with our 100th anniversary as the world's first national parks service.

Parks Canada, with the cooperation of Bowen Island Municipality (BIM) and the support of the Government of British Columbia, is exploring the possibility of establishing national park reserve lands on Bowen Island. The purpose of the feasibility assessment is to determine if it is practical and desirable to do so.

The preliminary park concept is a key step in the feasibility assessment process. The concept provides a broad overview of what lands would be included, and how they could be operated and managed. The concept is a product of community consultation and includes strategies to address key opportunities and concerns identified by the public. It is important to note that the consultation process to gather First Nations input is underway and feedback will be added to the report when the process is completed.

This preliminary concept is not intended to be a detailed plan, since many factors can only be resolved through negotiations with different levels of government. If deemed feasible, and if agreement is reached to establish national park reserve lands, a subsequent management planning process will take place, with full public and First Nations consultation.

Parks Canada is seeking input from Bowen Island residents, First Nations, stakeholders and the general public on this preliminary park concept. The feedback received will help shape the development of the proposed park concept which will be released as part of the preliminary feasibility assessment report.

A Vision for Establishment

The following statement summarizes the vision for the establishment of national park reserve lands on Bowen Island. This vision was created from feedback received at the Nov 3, 2010 Visioning Workshop held on Bowen Island.



National park reserve lands on Bowen Island will provide a unique example of the integration of a protected coastal and island ecosystem in close proximity to a large urban population. They will preserve and protect healthy examples of the rich ecological and cultural heritage of Bowen Island and provide a place of refuge for nature and people. The national park reserve lands will provide quality, sustainable, and low-impact opportunities for local residents, residents of Metro Vancouver, the broader Canadian public and international visitors to learn about, appreciate, experience and protect the ecological and cultural heritage of this unique coastal ecosystem at the mouth of Howe Sound. Park lands will be collaboratively managed in a way that respects the special character of Bowen Island and local and Aboriginal values.

Key Elements of the Vision:

Parks Canada will work to:

- Maintain or restore ecological integrity on national park reserve lands.*
- Protect and showcase several significant examples of Bowen Island's unique cultural heritage and resources.*
- Facilitate memorable opportunities to appreciate, understand, and enjoy national park reserve lands in sustainable, low-impact ways, while respecting the community's desire to reduce reliance on motor vehicles.*
- Offer outstanding in-park and outreach educational programs that provide opportunities for adults and children to connect with the cultural and natural heritage of national park reserve lands in ways that support the continued protection and stewardship of these resources.*
- Draw on the knowledge and resources of the community, and collaborate with educational and scientific organizations to help support these education and outreach programs.*



- *Provide a natural refuge adjacent to an increasingly developed region - a place to rest, reconnect with nature and rejuvenate.*
- *Act as a model of sustainable living, demonstrating how people can maintain the integrity of their natural environment while living within it.*
- *Manage national park reserve lands in a manner that respects the special rural island character and community values of Bowen Island and contributes to a sustainable island economy.*
- *Demonstrate through positive, respectful working relationships how the community and a national park can thrive together through stewardship, and a management model based on the advice and cooperation of others.*

Proposed Boundary

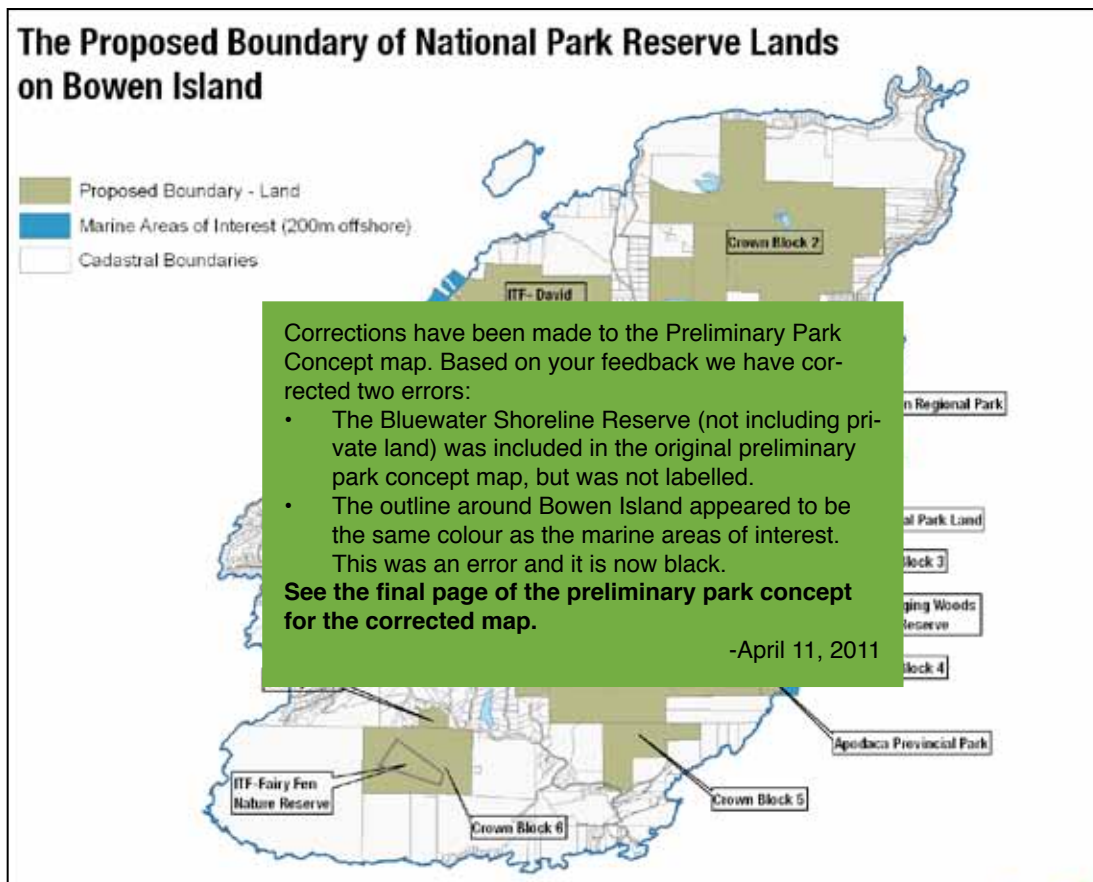
The proposed boundary for national park reserve lands is illustrated on the map below. The boundary encompasses 2,125 hectares or about 42% of Bowen Island and is based

on feedback from the Nov. 27, 2010 Park Concept Workshop held on Bowen Island. The boundary incorporates existing provincial protected areas, all of the British Columbia Crown lands (with the exception of the east half of Block 6 – Radar Hill), the three Islands Trust Fund properties, Crippen Regional Park and 2 small municipal properties (Quarry Park and municipal park lands adjacent to Crown Block 3).

The lands included within the proposed boundary, are considered important by Parks Canada to create viable national park reserve lands on Bowen Island. They are required to both optimize representation and protection of Bowen Island's natural heritage features, and to offer an accessible national park experience for visitors, particularly urban audiences.

The Inclusion of Crippen Regional Park

The Bowen Island community has emphasized the importance of Crippen Regional Park to the local community and Parks Canada recognizes that there are a number of concerns related to the inclusion of Crippen in the national park reserve concept. Parks Canada has identified Crippen



Regional Park as a key component of the preliminary park concept because:

- It serves as a gateway for visitors to access the national park reserve lands on Bowen Island;
- As a gateway, it provides the opportunity for positive, memorable visitor experiences by welcoming, engaging and supporting visitors from metro Vancouver; and
- Crippen Regional Park has interesting natural and cultural features that would be of interest to park visitors.

Parks Canada is currently proposing a number of means to address the concerns identified by Bowen Islanders:

- No entry pass will be needed for transiting through Crippen, en route to community services.
- Parks Canada would partner with several Island organizations to continue to operate facilities, services and recreational opportunities currently available in Crippen. Specifically, the memorial garden, ball diamond, heritage cabins, museum, orchard, meadow, horse ring and horse trails would continue under partnering agreements and licenses of occupation.
- Traditional festivals and other community events would continue under appropriate park permits.

Should there be general public support for the proposed boundary, Parks Canada would seek to collaborate with Metro Vancouver Parks to explore possibilities which may exist for including Crippen Regional Park in the proposed national park reserve lands.

Park Access

Parks Canada provides a variety of types of information to potential visitors, including information on the best ways to access a national park. In the case of Bowen Island, Parks Canada would work with third party operators of passenger ferries, water taxis, and buses and encourage visitors to use these alternate means of access. Visitor opportunities would also be designed to reduce on-island reliance on personal motor vehicles by park visitors.



Public Appreciation and Understanding

One of Parks Canada's priorities is to encourage Canadians, particularly urban Canadians, to appreciate the significance of the heritage places that are managed on their behalf and to foster public support for the protection and presentation of these places. Through activities such as interpretive programs, school programs, and special events, national park reserve lands on Bowen Island would provide rich and unique experiences for residents and visitors. In addition, off-island school programs and outreach activities could help connect Parks Canada places to people who may not be able to visit in person. Partnerships and collaborative work allow Parks Canada to broaden the reach of our programs and are essential to successfully engaging the local community and the public alike.

Park Facilities/ Services

Parks Canada would develop and manage the national park reserve lands on Bowen Island to facilitate memorable opportunities for visitors to appreciate, understand and enjoy the island in sustainable, low-impact ways. Visitor facilities and services would be high quality and low-impact in nature. An important element of the park concept is the provision of a welcoming function, which may include some form of infrastructure. The private sector on Bowen Island would continue to provide such services as accommodation, restaurants and shopping.

Conservation Through Education and Outreach

Parks Canada would welcome and encourage people to come to Bowen Island to participate in learning experiences. On-island educational programming could vary from on-site interpretative walks, to school programs, to displays. Parks Canada would also encourage partnerships with local and regional organizations and institutions to deliver specialized educational programming and research.

Parks Canada also focuses on educating Canadians outside the boundaries of national parks. To effectively engage off-island Canadians, particularly metro Vancouver's urban



population, Parks Canada would use a diversity of carefully targeted outreach education approaches including the Parks Canada website, new media, integration into urban venues and introduction of content into school curricula. Parks Canada would also encourage collaborative relationships with organizations across multiples sectors (for-profit, not-for-profit, scientific, education). It is hoped that these approaches would increase awareness of heritage values associated with national park reserve lands on the Island and foster a desire to protect natural areas, both within and outside national parks.

Recreational Opportunities and Support for Existing Uses

National park reserve lands on Bowen Island would support a range of low-impact activities including hiking, cross-country mountain biking, backcountry camping, picnicking, horseback riding and nature appreciation. Marine activities such as boating, kayaking and SCUBA diving would also be permitted. One of the major park planning tasks will be to work with the local community to determine the types and levels of access and use appropriate to each area of the park.

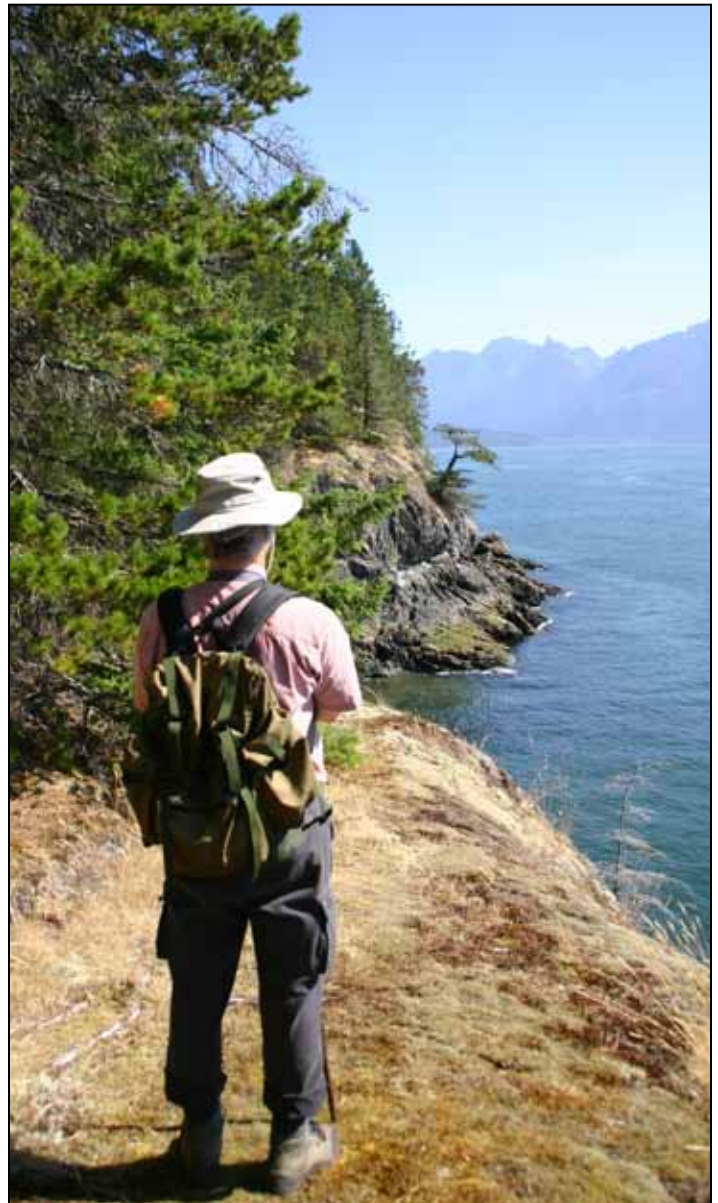
Walking and Hiking

Canada's national parks are known for their walking and hiking opportunities. There are already approximately 20 kilometres of well developed trails on Bowen Island, and many more in a less developed state, providing a good foundation for the development of a high quality walking and hiking experience. Parks Canada would work with the local community to inventory and assess the existing trails on Bowen Island. Where appropriate, Parks Canada would upgrade existing trails to reflect national park maintenance and visitor service standards and enhance the trail network to provide high quality visitor opportunities.

Horseback Riding

Recreational horseback riding is an activity that many people enjoy in several national parks across Canada, and is recognized as a popular activity on several existing trails

on Bowen Island. Parks Canada would work in collaboration with the Bowen Island Horse Owners and Riders Association (BIHORA) to inventory and assess existing equestrian trails and would make decisions on long term use through consultation and management planning. The existing equestrian facilities, such as the meadow, the horse ring and existing horse trails, would continue to be managed and maintained by BIHORA under a partnering agreement and license of occupation. Parks Canada would also consider entering into a partnering arrangement with third parties to offer public horseback riding opportunities.



Dog Walking

Parks Canada currently has a regulation requiring dogs to be leashed in national parks. This regulation is designed to protect sensitive habitats, protect wildlife, to ensure a positive experience for all visitors and for reasons of public safety. However, we understand the importance many residents of Bowen Island place on being able to walk their dogs off-leash. Through community consultation we will be considering new options. One possibility is to leave some existing dog-walking areas in adjacent parkland administered by other authorities. Another option is to establish a designated off-leash area within the national park reserve.

Mountain Biking

Parks Canada recognizes mountain biking as an increasingly popular sport in Canada and, within prescribed limits, welcomes mountain biking in many national parks. Where it is offered, cross-country is the principal form of mountain biking. Parks Canada would work with the local mountain biking community to inventory and assess the existing mountain biking trails. The final determination of how Parks Canada's mountain biking guidelines would be applied on Bowen Island, would take place during the management planning process which involves extensive

public consultation.

Camping and Overnight Opportunities

An important element of the national park experience in Canada is to provide a meaningful overnight experience that helps people connect to the natural environment. On Bowen Island, camping would be limited to walk-in or boat-in backcountry camping. Reservations may be required in some areas to ensure a quality experience in a natural environment. It is acknowledged that offering a primitive camping experience would require on-site management as a preventive measure to guard against such things as wildfire or inappropriate behaviour on national park reserve lands. Parks Canada would consider partnering with a third party to provide other forms of overnight accommodation, such as in restored historic cabins in Snug Cove or in low-impact yurts.

Pre-Existing Marine Infrastructure

Parks Canada will honor and accommodate pre-existing marine infrastructure such as docks and mooring buoys should they be located within the national park reserve.



Preservation and Protection

When developing and managing national park reserve lands, Parks Canada works towards the long term goal of maintaining or restoring ecological integrity. In managing for ecological integrity, Parks Canada also takes into consideration the cultural heritage and resources of the national park reserve lands, as well as historic community uses. The following describes the essential natural resource conservation and protection programs Parks Canada would pursue on Bowen Island.

Representation of Strait of Georgia Lowlands Natural Region

Canada's system of national parks was created to protect outstanding representative examples of the natural geography that can be found in Canada. With its location in the Coastal Western Hemlock (CWH) biogeoclimatic zone, the proposed park reserve lands on Bowen Island significantly augment the representation of the Strait of Georgia Lowlands natural region over what already occurs in Gulf Islands National Park Reserve. Post establishment, Parks Canada would undertake an inventory of natural resource values, including geology, landforms, vegetation, wildlife and habitats, on national park reserve lands to provide the necessary information to assess the quality of representation and identify resource management priorities. Emphasis will be placed on protecting the best examples

of under-represented characteristics of the Strait of Georgia Lowlands natural region, and ecosystems, critical habitats and lands that enhance ecological connections among protected areas.

Maintenance or Restoration of Ecological Integrity

Parks Canada's objective is to provide opportunities for people to enjoy national parks as special places without impairing their integrity. In other words, the maintenance or restoration of ecological integrity is the endpoint for park management. Before managers can work towards the maintenance or improvement of ecological integrity, they need to understand current conditions. To achieve this goal, Parks Canada would strive to:

- Undertake the necessary inventories and research to assess the current level of ecological integrity, ecosystem imbalances, and existing and possible new threats to ecological integrity on national park reserve lands.
- Recognize the value of national park lands as important watersheds and as the primary source of island residents' supply of fresh water.
- Establish indicators and park-specific measures for ecological integrity and develop and implement a monitoring and reporting program.



- Establish working relationships with interested First Nations, universities and colleges, environmental organizations and the Bowen community to gather, assess and share information about ecological integrity and the greater ecosystem.
- Collaborate with provincial and local government agencies, private land owners and others to achieve common goals in resource conservation and protection on national park reserve lands and adjacent marine and terrestrial areas.

Sensitive Ecosystems and Species of Concern

Parks Canada is mandated to consider and protect critical habitat for federally designated species at risk as outlined in the *Species at Risk Act*. In addition, Parks Canada works to protect unique and sensitive ecosystems on national park lands. A considerable amount of information is available on sensitive ecosystems and species of concern on Bowen Island. To protect sensitive ecosystems and species of special concern, Parks Canada would endeavor to:

- Identify special areas containing unique or endangered resources and protect these areas via appropriate zoning and management strategies.
- Establish inventory, monitoring and reporting programs for listed species, plant communities and ecosystems.

- Develop a greater understanding of habitat requirements for species at risk and develop management strategies for the protection of critical habitats.
- Involve knowledgeable individuals from the Squamish First Nation, Bowen community and educational institutions in developing and implementing inventory, recovery and educational programs.
- Initiate restoration projects that would provide opportunities for raising awareness among visitors and local and regional communities.

Protection of the Marine Environment

Bowen Island's marine environment is typical of both Howe Sound and the Strait of Georgia. The area is influenced by a combination of the cold waters from the fjord environment of Howe Sound and the Fraser River plume seaward of the island. According to some marine biologists, Bowen's underwater ecosystem is considered to be in relatively good condition, although there are significant concerns that rock fish, lingcod and abalone, among other species populations in the area, may be in jeopardy. In an effort to preserve and protect the marine environment, Parks Canada would work to:

- Establish inventory and monitoring programs for listed marine species.





- Develop a greater understanding of the habitat requirements for marine species at risk and develop
- management strategies for the protection of critical habitats.
- Identify special marine areas containing unique or endangered resources and protect these areas via appropriate zoning and management strategies.
- Involve knowledgeable individuals from First Nations, the local Bowen community and educational institutions in developing and implementing inventory, recovery and education programs.
- Identify key marine areas for potential restoration projects based on assessments of available knowledge and information.

A Rich Cultural Heritage

Where resources are deemed to have cultural value at the regional or local level, Parks Canada has a mandate to maintain those resources in a fashion appropriate to the value and the interests of the local communities and stakeholders. How these resources are managed is determined through consultations with the interested parties, and through management planning for the park.

Although some initial documentation of archaeological sites, settlement history and historic structures on Bowen Island has taken place, there is no complete inventory of cultural heritage (historic and archaeological) on the proposed national park reserve lands. If national park reserve lands were to be established, Parks Canada would inventory and assess the historical cultural heritage resources. Through management planning (which includes consultation) an appropriate approach to managing cultural resources would be developed.

Safety Considerations

Parks Canada is responsible for providing public safety programs that deal with the specific incidents and issues encountered within each heritage area. Parks Canada's public safety program involves the following:

- Identification and remediation of hazards related to infrastructure.
- Visitor risk management and public safety planning.
- Appropriate levels of search and rescue services.
- Targeted prevention, education and information programs that encourage self-reliance.
- Communication of site-specific hazards to visitors.
- Cooperation with other departments, non-governmental organizations, tourism operators, concessionaires, and service providers.

Emergency Services

Coordination of emergency services provided by Parks Canada staff and by community groups, the province, or other federal government departments is a very important operational issue. Maintaining effective working relationships with other emergency service organizations on and off the island is essential. If national park reserve lands were established on Bowen Island, Parks Canada would endeavour to:

- Work cooperatively with other government agencies, local groups and First Nations, where appropriate, to develop shared service agreements.
- Ensure that emergency service information and contacts are available in park information and strategically throughout the national park reserve lands.

Fire Management

The risk of fire, both natural and human caused, is ever present in forested environments. Parks Canada has considerable experience in fire management and control, as well as expertise in coordinating training activities and



response capabilities with local fire departments. If national park reserve lands were to be established on Bowen Island, Parks Canada would strive to:

- Develop a fire management plan that includes a fire assessment and control program to ensure public safety and support overall fire protection in the area of the national park reserve.
- Work cooperatively with the local volunteer fire department to establish mutual aid agreements, and with other governments to reduce fire hazards.

Prevention and Enforcement

Parks Canada staff monitor compliance and enforce park rules and regulations. All field staff have training focused on the prevention of enforcement situations occurring on national park lands. Until a national park reserve is scheduled under the *Canada National Parks Act* (2000), a variety of federal and provincial acts and regulations are used to ensure compliance and enforcement. Once the park is scheduled under the *Canada National Parks Act*, Parks Canada is responsible for enforcing national park acts and regulations. Parks Canada also works collaboratively with the RCMP, which plays the lead role in enforcing the criminal code.

Part of the Community

As a major land management agency on Bowen Island, Parks Canada would be a steward, neighbour, and member of the island community. By preserving and protecting important natural areas, with support from the community, Parks Canada could fulfil its role as a leader in environmental stewardship. Ongoing consultation with neighbouring property owners will ensure that relationships remain mutually respectful and collaborative. Parks Canada would encourage the continuation of community celebrations and island traditions.

Collaborative Management: A Voice for Local Citizens

National park reserve lands on Bowen Island would be managed by Parks Canada under the authority of the *Canada National Parks Act*, under the responsibility of the federal Minister of the Environment. These lands would be managed as part of the operation of the Gulf Islands National Park Reserve based in Sidney and supported by permanent staff and a seasonal workforce located on Bowen Island. A number of partners and contractors would support the operations.

The management of a national park reserve would be supported by a park advisory board. The board would advise the Park Superintendent and the Coastal BC Field Unit Superintendent, as appropriate, on matters relating to

the planning, management and operation of national park reserve lands. Members of the board are appointed by the Chief Executive Officer of Parks Canada on behalf of the Minister. Membership of the board would be balanced to effectively represent the interests of local residents, First Nations should they be interested in being on such a board, and those interests of Canadians focused on the protection, visitor experience and education mandate of national parks.

First Nations Involvement

Parks Canada will be working with the Squamish First Nation and the Hul'qumi'num Treaty Group to determine their involvement in the planning and management of the proposed national park reserve lands on Bowen Island. Parks Canada will explore a variety of options to ensure they have opportunities to be involved in the natural and cultural resources management and planning of the national park reserve, to share and use Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK), and to ensure the rights and interests of First Nations are respected.

Parks Canada's Proposed Investment

Based on this preliminary park concept and its implications for park management and operations, Parks Canada has prepared a rough estimate of the anticipated investment it would consider recommending should the outcome of the feasibility assessment be positive. Actual funding would



be determined through a business case analysis based on assessment of the properties and infrastructure that would make up the national park reserve lands on the island and the visitor opportunities that may be provided.

The capital investment to acquire the necessary infrastructure to set-up programs, services and operational readiness would be in the range of \$10 million over five years. The ongoing operating budget to pay staff, maintain infrastructure, and run programs is roughly estimated to be in the range of \$2 million per year. A commitment to funding for establishment and operations of national park reserve lands will be determined through negotiations for a park establishment agreement between the governments of British Columbia and Canada.

Creative Solutions to Fees

According to Parks Canada's revenue policy, user fees normally apply in national parks. This revenue constitutes a portion of each national park's operating budget, and is retained in the park where it is collected to help fund services, facilities and programs. How and where fees are collected is determined through community and visitor consultation processes.

Parks Canada has the ability to offer incentives or community-based discounting for the day-use of facilities and can, for example, offer an "early bird special" where annual passes can be purchased at a discount of 50%. This equates to about \$15.00 per adult or \$37.50 per family for an annual park pass.

On Bowen Island, Parks Canada understands community concerns with user fees and is seeking a way to respect the Agency's revenue policy while mitigating concerns of Bowen Island residents. Parks Canada is currently investigating options with BIM to enable Parks Canada to receive user fee revenues through mechanisms that do not require Bowen Island residents (individuals or families) to purchase park passes. If established as a national park reserve, consultation on user fees and management planning would provide guidance on what kind of services and facilities would be provided and how day use fees may apply.



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Aussi disponible en français.

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NEW! Corrections to the Preliminary Park Concept Map

Corrections have been made to the Preliminary Park Concept map. Based on your feedback we have corrected two errors:

- The Bluewater Shoreline Reserve is now labelled. It was included in the original preliminary park concept map, but was not labelled. Note: Private lands are not included.
- The outline around Bowen Island appeared to be the same colour as the marine areas of interest. This was an error and it is now black.

-April 11, 2011

The Proposed Boundary of National Park Reserve Lands on Bowen Island

