Cultus Lake is both a beloved residential community and one of the Lower Mainland’s most popular parks, attracting hundreds of thousands of visitors each year. The Cultus Lake Park Board is currently updating its Official Community and Park Plan, a process which benefits greatly from community input. This backgrounder is intended to provide information about Cultus Lake Park and many of the different factors which influence it. Beyond that, it will inform the development of the Official Community and Park Plan and hopefully motivate park users and residents to participate in the planning process.

Inside, you’ll find out much more about Cultus Lake Park:

■ The Beginnings of the Cultus Lake Park Area
■ Population and Demographics
■ Building and Housing Trends
■ Residential and Commercial Lease Information
■ Servicing and Infrastructure
■ Community Services
■ Transportation
■ Environmental Issues
■ Parks and Trails
■ Cultus Lake Park Board Revenue
■ For Future Consideration

More information available at our website www.plancultus.com
Stó:lô people have lived on and used the lands around Cultus Lake since the Holocene period, over 10,000 years ago. Cultus Lake was and still is a spiritually potent place within Stó:lô culture. Specific spiritual beings, such as the underwater bear, inhabit the rock bluffs and deep bays of Cultus Lake. Originally, a Stó:lô settlement known as Swilhcha was located at Main Beach. After that, a settlement known as Soowahlie was located closer to the Chilliwack River, along Sweltzer Creek. To this day, Cultus Lake has a place in Stó:lô culture, with canoe races held every year only metres from these historical landmarks.

European settlers began camping and recreating at the lake as early as the 1870s. Cultus Lake was used as a summer resort and picnic area until the early 1920’s. In 1924, the popularity of Cultus Lake led to the formation of a joint committee of the City of Chilliwack and the Township of Chilliwack to govern the lake. Governing the lake by the joint committee became unwieldy, and in 1932 the Cultus Lake Park Board was formed. When the Cultus Lake Park Board came into existence the slogan “A Natural Paradise” was incorporated into their promotional material.

251 hectares of land were acquired by the City and Township of Chilliwack from 1924 to 1957 to form the Cultus Lake Park area. The Crown grant specified that the land is to be used “forever for park use and no other purposes”. Seasonal and more permanent residential buildings began to appear on leased lots during this time period.

In 1939, a pavilion was built near Main Beach. This pavilion became the center of the Cultus Lake community. It included a dance hall, post office, confectionery, dining room, store, library, and beauty salon. By the early 1990s, the aging pavilion had lost its appeal and was torn down.

In 1942, a military training base was established near Vedder Crossing in the City of Chilliwack. The base precipitated the evolution of Cultus Lake Park from a summer resort to a year round community. Summer cottages were winterized and used as housing for military families due to a severe housing shortage in Chilliwack. A church and school were added to the community after the Second World War, and are still functioning today.

1 A Stó:lô-Coast Salish Historical Atlas, 2001
2 Cultus Lake Governance Study Fact Sheets, Governance, 2008
3 Chilliwack Museum and Archives website
Over 800,000 people visit Cultus Lake Park every year. As a seasonal destination, Cultus Lake Park has a full time population of approximately 675 people that nearly triples to over 1700 residents during the busy summer season. The average resident household size for Cultus Lake is 2.1 people per household. The average household size can be combined with the number of full-time single family dwellings (321) and the number of seasonal dwellings (147), determined from the 2013 BC Assessment roll, to estimate the current population of Cultus Lake Park.

The number of permanent full time residents at Cultus Lake Park does not appear to be increasing, due in part to a lack of residential development to provide new homes. According to BC Assessment, there are 17 vacant or undeveloped residential lots in Cultus Lake Park, which, if fully built out would increase the population by approximately 35 people. The market premiums associated with lakeside and resort properties may also influence population growth.

The chart on the right compares growth rates between Cultus Lake, the Fraser Valley Regional District and the Province as a whole from 1996 to 2011. Note that the growth rates for Cultus Lake are actually for Electoral Area E, which includes Cultus Lake, Columbia Valley and the Chilliwack River Valley.

Another important characteristic of the population at Cultus Lake Park is its relative average age. Compared to the population of the Fraser Valley Regional District, there is a greater proportion of people aged 50 and over living at Cultus Lake Park, as shown in the comparison chart directly to the right.

Not surprisingly, there is a corresponding lack of youth and young adults living within the Park Board area. This trend towards an aging population will influence the Cultus Lake Park community’s needs and demands for the future.

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4 Statistics Canada, 2011 Census Profiles
5 Ibid.
6 Ibid.
According to 2013 BC Assessment data for Cultus Lake Park, there are 468 single family dwellings located in the Park. Of these, 70% are full-time residences, with the other 30% only used seasonally. There are 17 vacant or undeveloped lots available for single family residential development.\(^7\)

The architectural styles of the homes at the lake reflect their summer cottage origins, although much of the original cottage stock has been replaced by newer homes that vary widely in design. Despite improvements in energy efficiency and the quality of building materials, these newer homes are typically much larger than the original cottages they have replaced, creating an increased demand on infrastructure such as sewage disposal and water provision.

Residential building types within the Cultus Lake Park Area are currently homogeneous, characterized by single family dwellings. There are no multi-family residential homes in the Park. The lack of duplexes, townhouses or apartments may present a future challenge for seniors and young families looking for housing alternatives.

The chart to the right displays the average assessed value for all housing types, including apartments and townhouses. The chart below this displays the assessed value for only single family dwellings.\(^8\)

While Cultus Lake Park home prices are related to the premium associated with living in close proximity to the lake and the demand for recreational properties within the Lower Mainland, they are also likely affected by the tenure situation within the Park Board area.

Regardless, the cost of a single family dwelling at Cultus Lake is comparable to other markets in the Fraser Valley. Housing alternatives are tied directly to affordability, and while affordability is most affected by market forces, land use policies and the direction of future development can have an impact on these important housing issues.

\(^7\) BC Assessment, 2013 Assessment Roll Data for Cultus Lake
\(^8\) Ibid.
Leases and Tenure

With the City of Chilliwack as the registered land owner, the Park Board has the authority to grant leases and licenses through the Cultus Lake Park Act. Prior to 1980, all leases were for a maximum term of one year and were renewed automatically annually.

Currently, the Park Board offers a combination of residential leases for a term of 21 years with the option to renew, and commercial leases under varying terms. Individual residents maintain ownership of building and improvements while the land remains under the authority of the Park Board while in trust of the City of Chilliwack.

There are 21 commercial leases within the Cultus Lake Park Board area. Among these, there is a wide range of rent levels and lease duration. The longest term runs until 2053, while the average lease is 5 years. Businesses in the Park Board area largely depend upon the seasonal visitors that travel to Cultus every summer.

Tourism is the principal economic driver at Cultus Lake. Every summer, hundreds of thousands of visitors come to spend time at the lake, waterpark, campground or any of the other amenities within the Park Board area. In 2013, there were more than 200,000 visitors to Sunnyside Campground alone. Understandably, tourism has a significant impact on both the economic well-being of Cultus Lake and the environmental health of the lake and surrounding area.

*Cult Lake Park, 2013 Lease Services*
Servicing and Infrastructure

Sewage Disposal

The Cultus Lake Sanitary Sewer System is owned by the Fraser Valley Regional District and operated by the Cultus Lake Park Board. The system was built between 1979 and 1980 and consists of septic tanks and disposal fields. The Sunnyside Boulevard and Lakeshore Drive residential areas, as well as the Cultus Lake Plaza commercial area and Cultus Lake Community School, are connected to the system. The Mountain View and Park Drive areas and Sunnyside Campground are serviced by individual private septic fields.\(^{10}\)

The current sewer system infrastructure is aging and is operating near capacity. It does not have additional room to accommodate future development.\(^{11}\) However, assessment of the system shows it still functions adequately.\(^{12}\) The condition of individual on-site sewage systems along Park and Mountain View Drive are unknown and are not monitored. Some of these systems are located in close proximity to Cultus Lake.

As “rest periods” for the soil lessen due to increases in base population and peak summer population, the ability of the soil to effectively remediate wastewater will decline. Demand for recreation and resort uses surrounding Cultus Lake is high and will likely increase over time. Therefore, the volume of sewage generated in Cultus Lake is likely to increase over time.

While there have been improvements to the system in the last 10 years, sanitary servicing in the Cultus Lake area (including the Park Board area, Provincial Park and Lindell Beach area) may be unsustainable.\(^{14}\) The Cultus Lake Park system may need to be upgraded to reduce environmental impacts as well as to accommodate future growth.

Stormwater

There is no formal infrastructure for stormwater management at Cultus Lake. Stormwater collects through open swales, or travels across impermeable surfaces, such as concrete, towards the lake. A stormwater system collects polluted water runoff from roads and properties and helps protect water quality; therefore, lack of a management system is a factor that may negatively impact the quality of lake water.

Cultus Lake has unusually high nitrogen and phosphorus concentrations which are leading to eutrophication of the lake, a process in which a “bloom” of excessive plant growth occurs rapidly and then decays. This process depletes oxygen in the water, which can harm fish populations and impact recreational and aesthetic enjoyment of the lake, which could have economic impacts in turn.\(^{13}\)

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\(^{10}\) Cultus Lake Governance Study Fact Sheet, 2008 Sewer Collection and Treatment
\(^{11}\) ISL Engineering and Land Services, 2012 Assessment of Cultus Lake Sanitary Sewer Infrastructure
\(^{12}\) Dayton and Knight Lt, 2010 Fraser Valley Regional District Cultus Lake Sewer Assessment
\(^{13}\) Marion Robinson, 2012 Cultus Lake Aquatic Stewardship Strategy 5 Year Report
\(^{14}\) Urban Systems, 2013 Draft Electoral Area Sewer Management Plan for the Fraser Valley Regional District Electoral Area E.
**Servicing and Infrastructure**

**Drinking Water**

Drinking water for the entire Cultus Lake Park Board area is provided through a community water system, with the exception of the golf course and water park. Water is not metered. Water is obtained from two wells and stored in a reservoir located past Lakeshore Drive. The wells are considered to be at low risk of contamination from potential nearby sources, but they are located approximately 150 m away from the Cultus Lake sewer system’s disposal fields, closer than would be recommended if the system were being built today.

An assessment done in 2008 by Urban Systems for the Fraser Valley Regional District recommended a number of upgrades to the community water system, with the main item being replacement of the existing reservoir with a larger capacity one to provide increased storage and improved fire flows.

The study determined the need for additional storage, in addition to the current reservoir’s capacity, in order to meet residential, school and commercial fire flow demand standards.

**Solid Waste**

Waste management consists of the collection and disposal of garbage, recycling and yard trimmings from residential, commercial and public areas. The Cultus Lake Park Board contracts out garbage and recycling collection for commercial and residential properties. Garbage and recycling is collected weekly. Residents are restricted to two cans weekly, but have no limits on recycling. Yard waste is collected by the Park Board’s public works staff and disposed of within the Park.

The garbage is disposed of at the Bailey Sanitary Landfill, located in the City of Chilliwack. The landfill is scheduled to operate until 2045.

Cultus Lake used to have its own landfill, but it has since ceased operations. The Ministry of the Environment has required a formal closure and remediation of this landfill. No closure plan has been approved by the Ministry to date.

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15 Cultus Lake Governance Study Fact Sheet, 2008 Water Services
16 Urban Systems, 2008 Cultus Lake Park Financial Sustainability and Governance Alternatives - Infrastructure Servicing Update
17 Cultus Lake Governance Study Fact Sheet, 2008 Solid Waste Management
Community Services

Police

Police Services are provided by the Chilliwack Detachment of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. The detachment operates under an integrated model, meaning members are moved around to address needs as they arise. Additional members are made available during the summer to deal with the higher demand that accompanies the significant rise in visitors to the lake, which is partially paid for by the Park Board.18

The Cultus Lake Park Patrol is operated by the Park Board, independent from the RCMP. They provide bylaw enforcement during the summer season, as well as part time during the off season.

School

The Cultus Lake Community Elementary School is within Chilliwack School District #33. The School District supplies bus service to the area. The current school was built in 1960 with the addition of a gym in the 1980s. The capacity of the school is 170 students. Enrollment for 2012 was 143 students. The enrollment projection for the next 15 years is steady and ranges from 140 to 150 students, so additional capacity for new students is available.19

Cultus Lake Citizens on Patrol provide a neighbourhood watch program within the community. The program is a community initiative that relies on volunteers to patrol the streets of the community on weekend nights.

Fire Protection

Fire protection is provided by the Cultus Lake Volunteer Fire Department, comprised of over 20 individual volunteers, and administered and funded by the Cultus Lake Park Board.20 Fire hazards associated with the current housing stock, much of which is older and located on smaller than average lots, increases the fire hazard risk. Future development will need to address fire protection and must be consistent with the level of protection available.

A Community Wildfire Protection Plan was recently developed for Cultus Lake Park by Fireline Consulting. The Plan makes recommendations based on FireSmart guidelines and fuel management practices in relation to land use and development within Cultus Lake Park.21

18 Cultus Lake Governance Study Fact Sheet, 2008 Police Service
19 Chilliwack School District, 2013 Baragar Projection for Cultus Lake Community School
20 Cultus Lake Governance Study Fact Sheet, 2008 Fire Protection and Emergency Services
21 FireLine Consulting, 2013 Cultus Lake Park Community Wildfire Protection Plan
**Transportation**

**Road Network**

The sole unrestricted connection to and from Cultus Lake is along the two-lane Columbia Valley Highway, which connects to Chilliwack at Vedder Mountain Road, and is under the jurisdiction of the provincial Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure. A single lane roundabout was constructed in 2011 at the intersection of Columbia Valley Road and Sunnyside Boulevard.

There are approximately 8 km of local roads and lanes within Cultus Lake Park. Of these, 75% are paved.\(^{22}\) The local roads are under the authority of the Cultus Lake Park Board. The widths of many of these local roads are below typical municipal standards. In recent years some traffic calming strategies have been implemented, such as the extensive use of speed bumps along residential streets.

A traffic study completed in 2012 for Cultus Lake and Columbia Valley estimated an average annual growth rate of 3-5% over the last 10 years.\(^{21}\) Increases in traffic volume are in keeping with overall population growth in the Region and in Metro Vancouver. New development around Cultus Lake, such as the Cottages, adds to traffic volume.

During off-peak periods (spring, fall and winter), traffic volumes are within the road capacity, but on peak days (summer weekends) volume exceeds capacity and the level of service is poor. Traffic volumes during the peak summer months are twice as high as the yearly average.

The main pinch point found in the study was the Columbia Valley and Vedder Mountain Road intersection, which is under the jurisdiction of the City of Chilliwack and the Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure. The City of Chilliwack is in the process of completing a preliminary design for the Vedder Bridge, Vedder-Chilliwack Lake Road intersection, and the Columbia Valley-Vedder Mountain Road intersection, and will be actively seeking funding solution for this project in 2014. These future upgrades are a priority for the City of Chilliwack and will impact traffic flows for Cultus Lake.

The chart on the right displays Saturday Peak Hour Traffic at some local attractions. These figures suggest that traffic volume drops significantly beyond the boundary of the Cultus Lake Park Board.\(^{23}\)

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\(^{22}\) Cultus Lake Governance Study Fact Sheet, 2008 Loca\(l\) Roads

\(^{23}\) Delcan Corporation, 2012 Cultus Lake Traffic and Transportation Study
Transportation

Transit

Transit in Cultus Lake is provided through a seasonal shuttle bus funded by BC Transit and the City of Chilliwack, and FVRD electoral area “B”. The shuttle bus currently operates from the beginning of July to the beginning of September. Pick up starts at Vedder at Promontory Road in Chilliwack and drops off at the Cultus Lake Community School. It operates 11 times a day, seven days a week through the summer.\(^{24}\) A year-round handyDART and taxi saver program is available for persons with disabilities.

Outside of the summer months, the nearest transit stop is located at Vedder and Keith Wilson Road, approximately 4km from Cultus Lake Park.\(^{25}\) There are no plans to expand the summer shuttle service. As there are few services and amenities available in the Park year round that the community can walk to, such as a grocery store, medical offices or pharmacy, residents must rely on private vehicles for transportation, and the community could be considered car dependent.

Parking

There are two main Cultus Lake Park parking lots (Lot A and Lot B) that have capacity for approximately 700 vehicles; parking fees are charged at these lots and generate revenue for the Park Board. Residential parking is managed via a new residential and guest parking permit process administered by the Cultus Lake Park Board. Revenue generated from parking is used to offset the cost of maintaining the public areas at Cultus Lake.

Walking and Cycling

There are no separated or elevated sidewalks in Cultus Lake Park; however, there is a lakefront pathway that connects from Lakeshore Drive to Sunnyside Campground, along with many unofficial pathways and trails through the Park. A marked, paved shoulder along Sunnyside Blvd and Columbia Valley Highway provides pedestrian and cyclist connections along the road network in Cultus Lake. The shoulder is generally 3 feet (1 meter) wide or less and is shared between pedestrians and cyclists; there is minimal separation from motorized vehicles.

Two marked and signed crosswalks and one special treatment (bricked) crosswalk are located at the roundabout intersection. One other crosswalk on Columbia Valley Highway connects the waterpark to the commercial shopping plaza.

Although there are some bicycle street markings further south past Cultus Lake Park on Columbia Valley Highway, there are no dedicated bike lanes in the park. Bicycling is not permitted along the lakefront pathway.

\(^{24}\) BC Transit, 2013 Fraser Valley Regional Schedule

\(^{25}\) Cultus Lake Governance Study Fact Sheet, 2008 Transit Service
Cultus Lake Park is known for its natural environment, including Cultus Lake itself and the surrounding forested area. The community is located within the Coastal Western Hemlock Ecological Zone, and is an area of high ecological value.\textsuperscript{26} The natural environment is one of Cultus Lake Park’s most important assets.

There are known Species at Risk in Cultus Lake Park, including, but not limited to the Cultus pygmy sculpin, which is only found in Cultus Lake, and the Cultus sockeye salmon which spend half their lives in Cultus Lake as fry and spawners. The area is home to other endangered species, including the Pacific giant salamander, the coastal tailed red frog, and the red-legged frog.\textsuperscript{27}

Cultus Lake faces multiple threats to its ecological health. Major pressures that could impact the long term sustainability of the Lake are briefly identified here:

- Sediment run-off
- Shore Erosion
- Nutrient Loading
- Invasive Species

- Eurasian watermilfoil is an invasive aquatic plant first documented in Cultus Lake in the 1970s. It spread rapidly and now covers most of the shallow areas of Cultus Lake.\textsuperscript{28}

\textsuperscript{26} Caring for Cultus Lake A Handbook for Residents and Visitors
\textsuperscript{27} Ministry of Environment, 2009 Chilliwack River Watershed Strategy
\textsuperscript{28} Ibid
As Cultus Lake Park is one of the primary recreational destinations in the Fraser Valley Regional District, it is likely that demand for the Park’s recreational amenities will increase in proportion to the general population increase of the Region (which has a growth rate estimated to be 2.3% per year).

Furthermore, according to a Regional Outdoor Recreation Study done in a joint partnership between Metro Vancouver and the FVRD, 5% of Metro Vancouver residents visit the FVRD for recreation, so communities such as Surrey, Langley, and Abbotsford may increasingly contribute to the growing demand for recreation at Cultus Lake.29

**Boat Launches**

There are two boat launches located in the Park, one at the end of Sunnyside Blvd, and another within the Sunnyside Campground area. There are also two launches within the Cultus Lake Provincial Park lands. Cultus Lake is closed to open-air exhaust motors. Boats that have registered with the Park Board and received a designated buoy can be left on the lake. Waterskiing is allowed on Cultus Lake (travel restricted to a counter-clockwise direction).

**Other recreational opportunities at the Park:**
- The Cultus Lake Waterslides
- Giggle Ridge Adventure Golf
- Adventure Park
- Funland Indoor & Outdoor play park
- Beach Buoy Leisure Rentals
- Tap-Ins Putting Course, 18 hole, Par 70 putting course
- Cultus Lake Golf Club, an 18 hole, Par 63 course
- Main Beach Boat Rentals & Concession

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29 LEES + Associates, FVRD and Metro Vancouver, 2011 Regional Outdoor Recreation Opportunities Study

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**Trails**

There are several high quality hiking trails in close proximity to Cultus Lake Park, such as Teapot Hill and the Seven Sisters Trail. Details and directions to these trails can be found at [www.cultuslake.com/hikes-trails](http://www.cultuslake.com/hikes-trails)
Parks, Trails and Recreation

Park Users

With new activities like stand-up paddle boarding and geocaching to old favourites fishing and kayaking, Cultus Lake Park offers an wide range of recreational opportunities.

Of these, it is the more passive recreational activities, such as swimming and walking or hiking, that are the most popular.  

Camping

Sunnyside Campground is located in the Cultus Lake Park Board area and is operated by the Park Board. Typically, the campground operates from April 15 until September 30. In 2013 however, the campground extended operations until mid-October. Sunnyside offers 353 seasonal, 132 tenting and 104 full-hookup sites, with waterfront and view options. There are also several Provincial campgrounds located adjacent to Cultus Lake, south of Cultus Lake Park. Combined, these Provincial campgrounds offer an additional 300 camping sites.

<table>
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<td>40 to 60</td>
<td>52%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Over 60</td>
<td>20%</td>
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Cultus Lake Visitors

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<td>Sunnyside</td>
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<td>197,048</td>
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<tr>
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<td>732,032</td>
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<td>Total</td>
<td>724,640</td>
<td>805,047</td>
<td>920,080</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

30 Marion Robinson, 2011 Cultus Lake User Survey Report
31 Ibid
32 Cultus Lake Park, 2013 Data on Visitors to Sunnyside Campground
Since the Park Board does not have the ability to levy taxes, the rental rates are effectively fees paid by residents for services received – similar to municipal taxes. Currently, rental rates are levied based upon the location (proximity to the lake), size of the lot, and frontage of the lot.

The chart to the right shows the largest revenue sources for the Park Board in 2013. While they require considerable infrastructure and servicing, residential leases only account for a small portion of the Park Board’s total revenue. Cultus Lake Park Board does not have the ability to incur debt. This makes financing large infrastructure projects a challenge. Cultus Lake Park area explores partnerships between different levels of government for infrastructure projects; similarly to the FVRD owned sewer system operated by Cultus Lake Park Board.

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33 Cultus Lake Park Board, 2013 Budget and Five-Year Plan
The Cultus Lake Park Board is engaging residents and park users to develop a new official Community and Park Plan which will guide stewardship of the park over the next 20 years.

The issues identified in this backgrounder and the research that has been completed will contribute to the development of robust goals and policies within the new Cultus Lake Park Official Community and Park Plan. The Plan will tell the current and future Park Board what you want Cultus Lake to look like, feel like, and in what kind of place you want to live!

The Plan will be developed over the next year (2013 to 2014), with public involvement occurring throughout the process. Have your say in the Cultus Lake Park of the future. Get involved, and stay involved, throughout the progress of the Official Community and Park Plan by visiting our website at www.plancultus.com.

We want to hear what your opinions are for the future of Cultus Lake Park. We currently have an online survey that is available through our website and is open until November 2013. The more input we get, the more representative the plan becomes, so stay tuned for future event listing.

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