



Gowlland Tod Park

Management Plan Addendum

Partridge Hills Multi-Use (Cycling and Hiking) Trails

December 2022



BC Parks

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Approved by:



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Date

Introduction

This document is an Addendum to the 1996 [Gowlland Tod Park Management Plan](#). The Gowlland Tod Park Management Plan establishes a long-term vision and management direction for the park and sets out objectives for protection of natural and cultural values, and the provision of recreational opportunities, including appropriate types and levels of use and development.

The Gowlland Tod Park Management Plan provides direction to evaluate the existing trail network to ensure that trail locations conform to environmental sensitivities, the management actions and zoning of the management plan, and the vision statement for the park. The plan describes the network of hiking trails in the park and lists the Partridge Hills as one of several priority areas for further assessment. The plan also identifies initial cycling trails and provides direction to limit designated cycling trails until there has been further on-site assessment. Upon assessment and where necessary, BC Parks may add and/or subtract trails from the trail system outlined in the management plan. Following completion of this assessment, the management plan indicates an addendum will be appended to the plan identifying the hiking and cycling trails of Gowlland Tod Provincial Park.

The purpose of this Addendum is to designate trails for cycling and hiking in the Partridge Hills area of Gowlland Tod Provincial Park. This Addendum is supplementary to the Gowlland Tod Park Management Plan, which continues to provide approved management direction for the park.

Management Issue and Objectives

As outdoor recreation in the capital region continues to grow, Partridge Hills has become a major destination for recreational users. Prior to the development of this trail plan, the Partridge Hills area of Gowlland Tod Park included several designated hiking trails. However, a much larger network of user-created trails was used for hiking and mountain biking. In the absence of formal trails and facilities, this unmanaged use has damaged sensitive ecosystems in the park. The unmapped but heavily used trails have also created confusion and difficulty for first responders attending to injuries and lost visitors in the park.

An updated trail plan was developed for Partridge Hills to:

- Formalize trails in Partridge Hills in order to better manage impacts from recreational use;
- Reduce the impact of the user-created trail network on sensitive ecosystems;
- Ensure the park connects, where practical and environmentally suitable, to an integrated trail system that provides the public with the opportunities to hike, walk and cycle throughout the Capital Regional District; and,
- Develop, in cooperation with partner organizations, management strategies to protect the natural environment of the park.

Assessment Process

With the assistance of professional biologists and trail specialists, BC Parks mapped and assessed the condition of the existing, user-created trails in Partridge Hills. This included the completion of an environmental impact assessment to evaluate the impacts of existing trail uses on the park's natural, recreational, and cultural values. Changes to the trail network were recommended based on the results of this evaluation. A number of trails were proposed for removal (approximately 7.6 km in total), and others were recommended to be formalized as multi-use trails suitable for both hiking and cycling (approximately 16.4 km in total).

First Nations and stakeholders were invited to provide input into the proposed trail plan in 2021 and 2022, and an open house was held in December 2021 to provide an opportunity for public comment.

The updated trail plan incorporates strategies to reduce the impact of the existing, user-created trail network and well-established recreational use patterns on sensitive ecological values. These include:

- Decommissioning redundant trails (multiple trails accessing the same location);
- Decommissioning trails crossing sensitive ecosystems, such as wetlands, wet meadows, and sensitive herbaceous ecosystems;
- Restoring decommissioned trails with native vegetation and coarse woody debris;
- Clearly defining designated multi-use trails for the public;
- Installing fencing in open areas to limit trail braiding; and,
- Posting maps and interpretive signage to promote responsible trail use, including signage describing trail etiquette and appropriate yielding to fellow trail users.

The vision statement for Gowlland Tod Provincial Park foresees the park continuing to protect the rare dry Coastal Douglas-fir habitat and continuing its important role in providing people with day-use opportunities for experiencing nature and recreation. The updated trail plan for Partridge Hills falls within the Natural Environment Zone and Special Feature Zone. The Natural Environment Zone is intended to provide for a variety of easily accessible off-road outdoor recreation activities in a largely undisturbed natural environment, while the Special Feature Zone is intended to protect the sensitive arbutus/wildflower ecological community in the Partridge Hills. The updated trail plan respects this vision and zoning by removing and improving trails to lessen the impacts of established recreational use patterns on sensitive ecosystems; providing accessible outdoor recreation activities; clearly defining designated trails; and promoting responsible trail use through interpretive signage.

Multi-use Trails of Partridge Hills

Figure 1 (p.4) shows the resulting, designated multi-use trails in the Partridge Hills area of Golland Tod Provincial Park, where walking/hiking and cycling will be considered appropriate uses. Accompanying the trail plan is a small, planned parking lot on Willis Point Road that will provide direct access to the park trails.

Over time, adjustments may be made to the designated multi-use trails in the Partridge Hills area in response to ongoing monitoring and management of natural, cultural, and recreational values. The trail map will be updated to reflect any future adjustments.

Implementation

Implementation of the designated multi-use trail plan for the Partridge Hills includes initial capital projects to decommission and restore user-created trails identified for removal, and to improve designated trails to meet accepted trail standards.

Ongoing implementation will include regular trail maintenance, monitoring, partnerships, and public outreach. BC Parks has a formal partnership agreement with the South Island Mountain Biking Society to assist with maintaining the newly designated trail system and promoting sustainable use by park visitors.

Trail Map

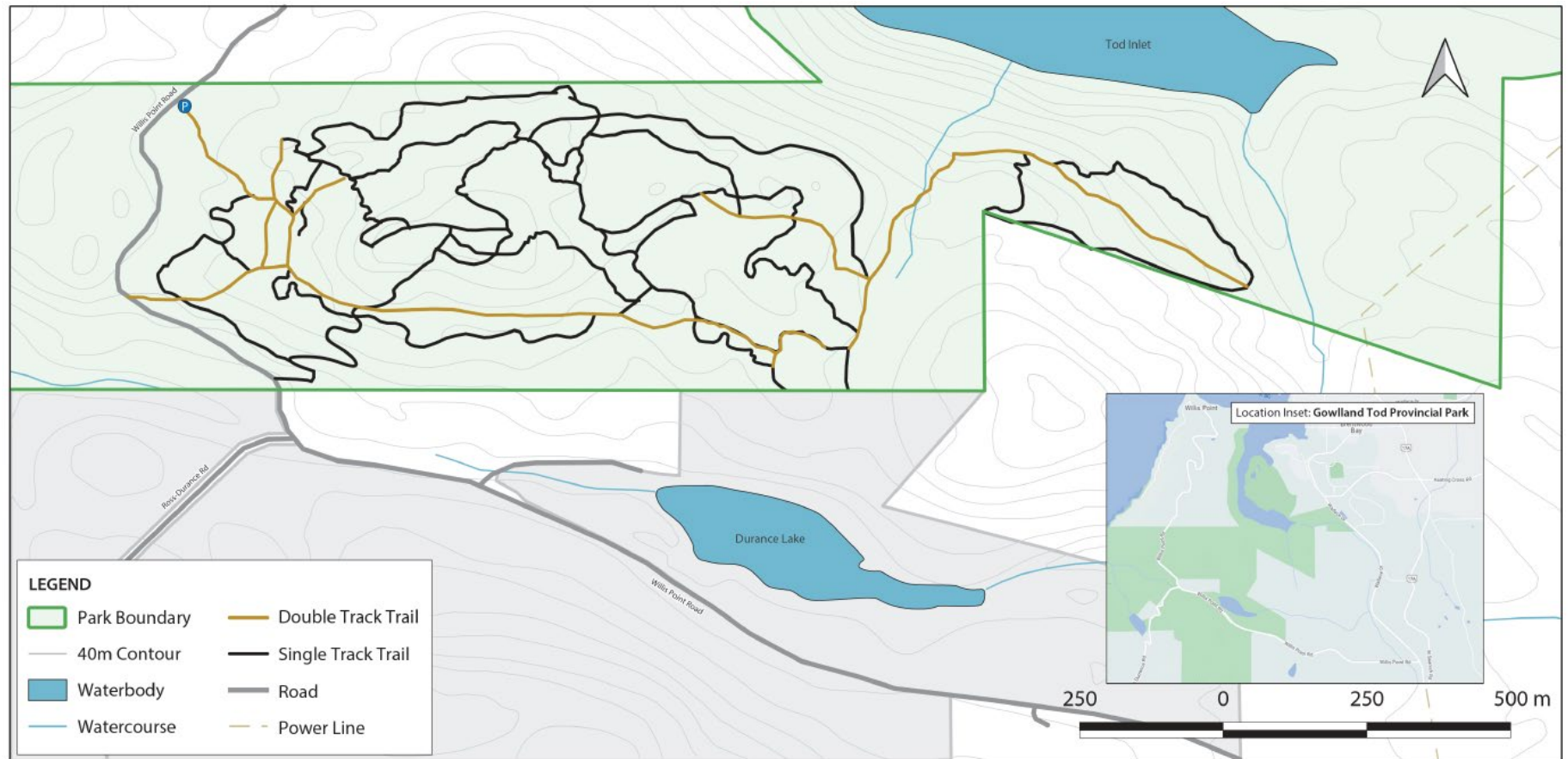


Figure 1. Designated Multi-use Trails in the Partridge Hills.