

Parkville Wetlands Management Plan

What We Heard: Phase one engagement



Prepared by ISL Engineering

July 4, 2023



Acknowledgements

We would like to thank all the residents, members of Council, staff, and community organizations from the City of Parksville for taking the time to share your experiences, wisdom, and guidance throughout the Parksville Wetlands Park Management Plan community engagement activities.

We are especially grateful to the many community groups, organizations and members of the public that have dedicated their time, expertise and knowledge of the wetlands.

Contents

1. PARKSVILLE WETLANDS PARK MANAGEMENT PLAN OVERVIEW.....	3
2. ENGAGEMENT OVERVIEW	4
Engagement at a Glance	5
How we shared information	5
Who We Heard FROM?.....	6
3. SUMMARY OF WHAT WE HEARD.....	7
Frequency, time of year and access.....	7
Use of the Parkville Wetlands	9
4. KEY THEMES	11
5. NEXT STEPS	13
.....	13
6. ADDITIONAL INFORMATION & RESOURCES PROVIDED TO THE PROJECT TEAM.....	14

1. PARKSVILLE WETLANDS PARK MANAGEMENT PLAN OVERVIEW

The City of Parksville is taking important steps to develop a Park Management Plan for the Parksville Wetlands. This 15-year, comprehensive Park Management Plan for Parksville Wetlands will provide a clear direction for both ongoing park management and future park enhancements. Today, the Parksville Wetlands serves many functions for the community of Parksville - a wildlife sanctuary, a water storage resource, a community park, and a commuter network.

The City of Parksville has engaged ISL Engineering to develop and deliver a Park Management Plan for Parksville Wetlands including a Park Concept Plan. The Park Management Plan will include strategies for education, stewardship, maintenance, conservation, land protection, and cultural management. The Park Concept Plan will show proposed future amenities, path connections and habitat improvements. It will include direction and guidance on the types, locations, uses and activities within different parts of the park including visitor use, accessibility, and amenities.

As part of this work, the first round of community engagement was carried out from May to June 2023. This report summarizes the experiences and insights shared by residents, community groups, organizations, and First Nations.

Engagement activities were designed to bring people and interested groups together for active and meaningful conversations to listen, understand, learn what is important and identify areas to address within the Park Management Plan. This report outlines what we are hearing so far.



2. ENGAGEMENT OVERVIEW

The City of Parkville recognizes the values and experiences of those who live near, use, and have interest in the Parkville Wetlands. Phase one of the engagement activities were used to create awareness of the Park Management Plan including how it is used, why it is important and the principles the project team is using to create the draft plan. This initial phase of engagement followed the review of documents, site investigation and environmental assessment and supplemented the technical review by collecting the experiences and feedback from the people and organizations who use and care about the wetlands park. The insights collected will be incorporated into the on the project team's background analysis to inform the Park Management Plan and Park Concept Plan.

During this phase of engagement, participants were asked to share their perspectives on how they use the park, what's important, what can be improved and what should be the top priorities or most important item they would like to see in the Park Management Plan.

Round 1 engagement included:

- **Let's Talk Parkville Website**

Project information was shared on the Let's Talk Parkville engagement platform including background information, engagement dates, public survey, and background documents.

- **Community Open House – June 6, 2023**

This event provided an opportunity for positive and meaningful participation for residents and interested parties to learn about the project and have the opportunity to share their experiences, knowledge and insight.

- **Key Interest Group Interviews – June 2023**

Interviews were held with key interest groups to gather information and input on the strengths, challenges and needs for specific interest groups including an opportunity to gather additional information and studies to review as part of the development of the Park Management Plan.

- **Survey – June 6 – June 27, 2023**

A public survey was available online on the City of Parkville's website and the Let's Talk Parkville engagement platform.

Engagement at a Glance



203 People Participated



50+ PEOPLE ATTENDED THE OPEN HOUSE



8 PEOPLE INTERVIEWED



145 COMPLETED THE SURVEY



358 VISITED THE PROJECT WEBSITE

How we shared information

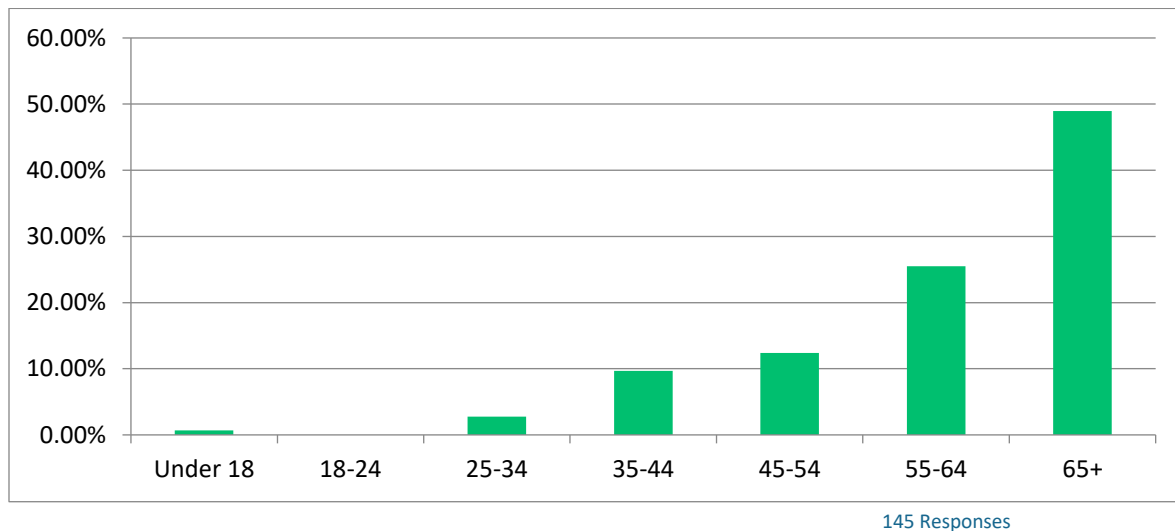
- News Release (May 10, 2023 & June 5, 2023)
- E-newsletter (June 2, 2023 & June 16, 2023)
- City newspage in PQB News (May 10, 2023 & June 14, 2023)
- Newspaper advertisement (May 31, 2023)
- Radio ads on the Beach and The Lounge (May 26, 2023 – June 6, 2023)
- Local events calendar listings
- City of Parkville website listing on the main site and calendar listings
- City Hall – project handout and poster
- Facebook – Open house event post (May 11, 2023), Survey post (June 6, 2023)
- Twitter – Open house post (May 11, 2023)

Who We Heard FROM?

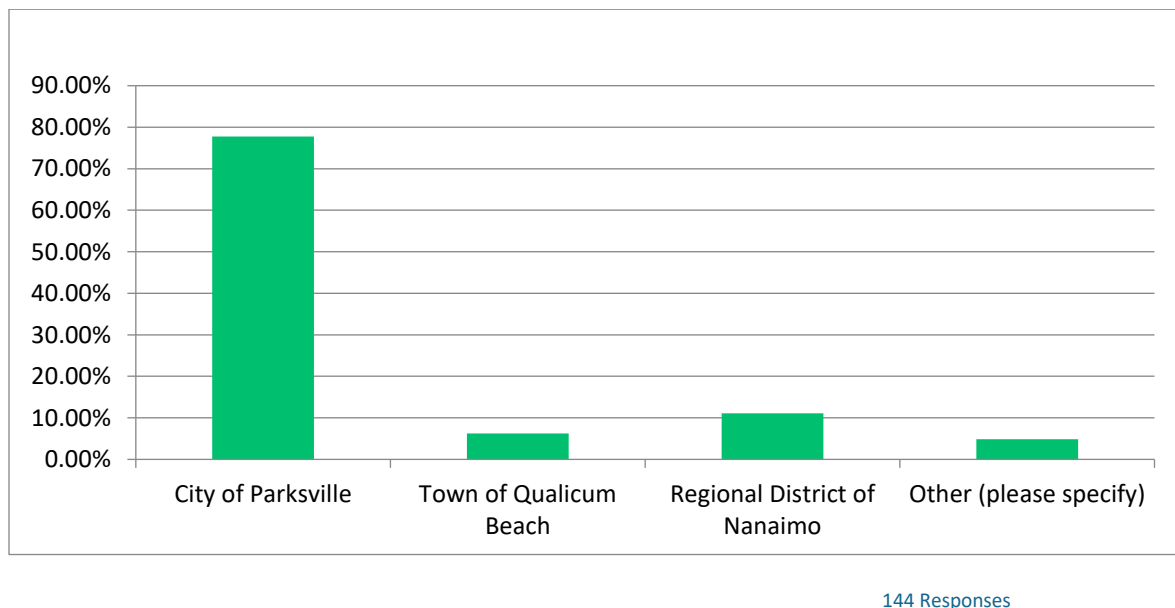
To date, we have heard from approximately 145 people through the engagement process for the Parksville Wetlands Park Management Plan

Of the 145 people who have completed a survey, the highest percentage of participants were age 45+ and lived in the City of Parksville.

What is your age range?



Where do you live?



Others

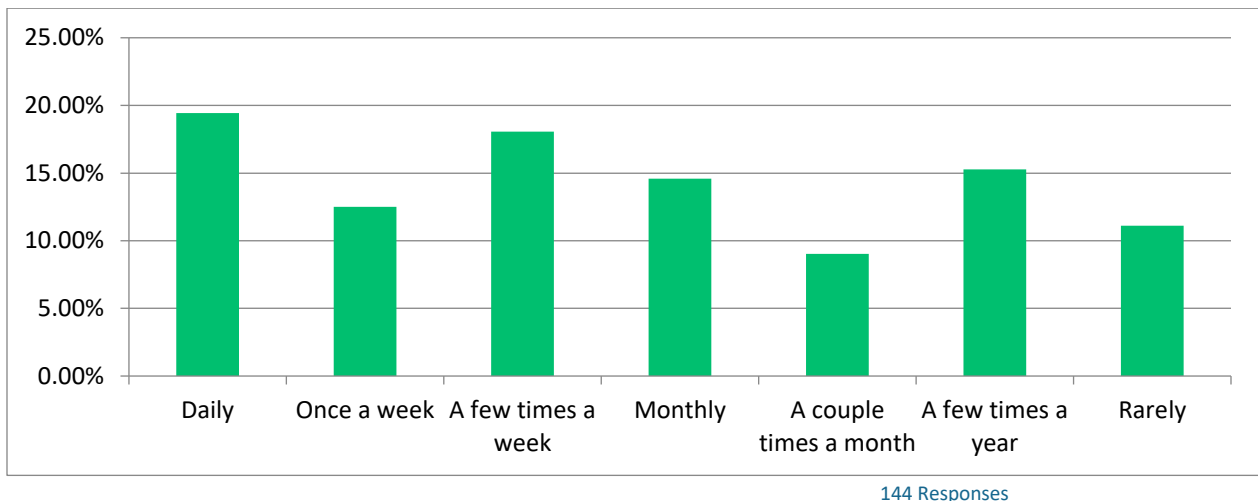
- Nanaimo (2)
- Errington (3)
- French Creek (1)
- Not specified (1)

3. SUMMARY OF WHAT WE HEARD

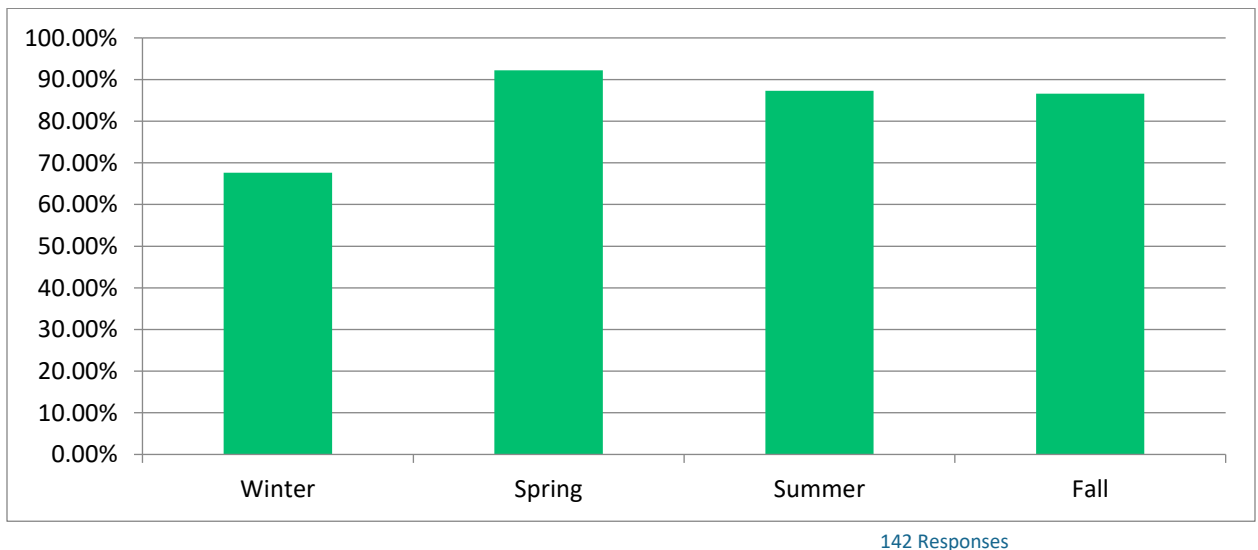
Frequency, time of year and access

Close to fifty (50) percent of survey participants visit the Parkville Wetlands multiple times a month with twenty (20) percent using the park daily. Although participants tended to use the park year-round, they shared they visited on average twenty (20) percent less in the winter months. Close to fifty (50) percent of participants access the park by car, just over forty (40) percent access by walking and less than ten (10) access by bike. Those who drive, access the park primarily at Despard Avenue, followed by Hirst Avenue with the least access at Coldwater Road

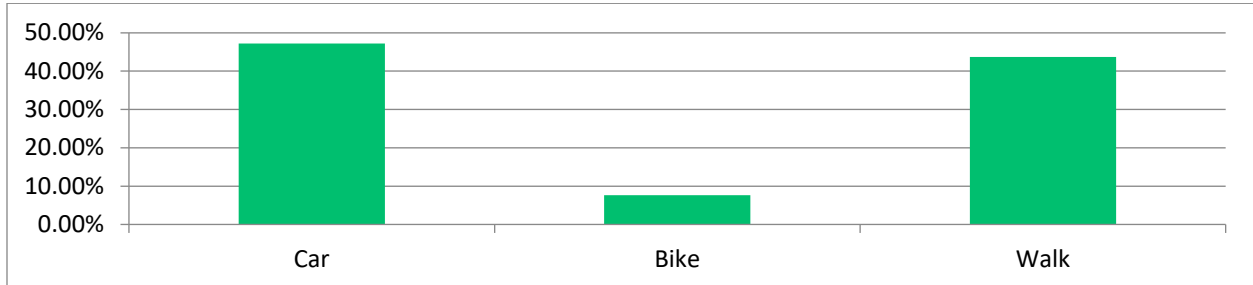
How often do you visit Parkville Wetlands?



What time of Year do you use the Parkville Wetlands?



What mode of Transportation do you typically use when traveling to and from the Parksville Wetlands?



142 Responses

If you typically travel to Parksville Wetlands by car, at which location do you most often park?



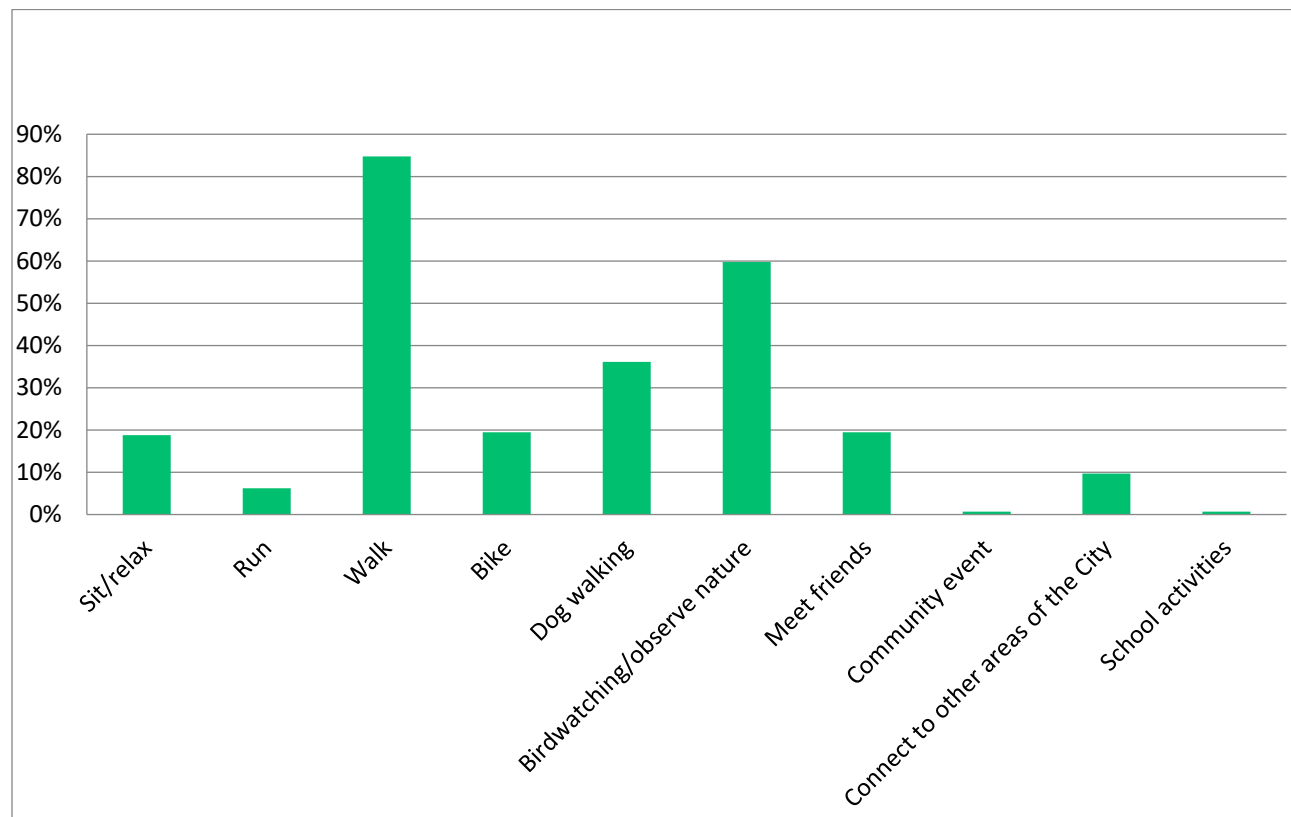
83 Responses

Use of the Parkville Wetlands

Over eighty (80) percent of participants walk in Parkville Wetlands with fifty (50) percent stating they birdwatch and observe nature and forty (40) are dog walkers. Additionally, twenty (20) percent of users sit and relax, just over five (5) percent run in the park and twenty (20) percent bike in the park.

The most important amenities shared by participants include additional walking trails, benches, boardwalks, viewing tower, wildlife hide, fencing, wayfinding signage, interpretive signage and the least important included picnic tables and dog walking. Over forty (40) percent of participants said they would use the park more often if there were additional paths / trails and areas to explore nature. The greatest barriers to using the park was not having enough time.

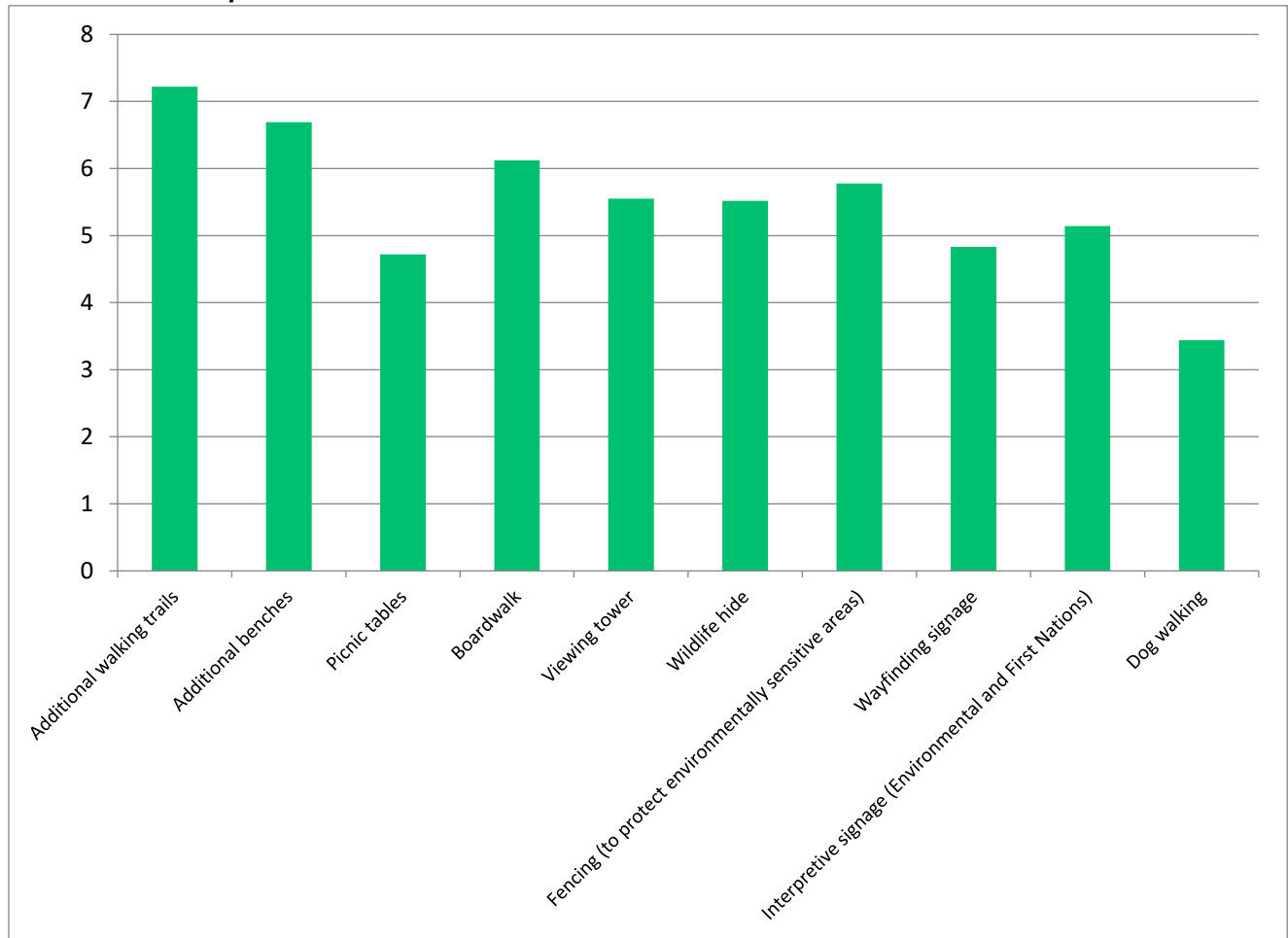
What do you usually do while in the Parkville Wetlands? (Select all)



143 Responses

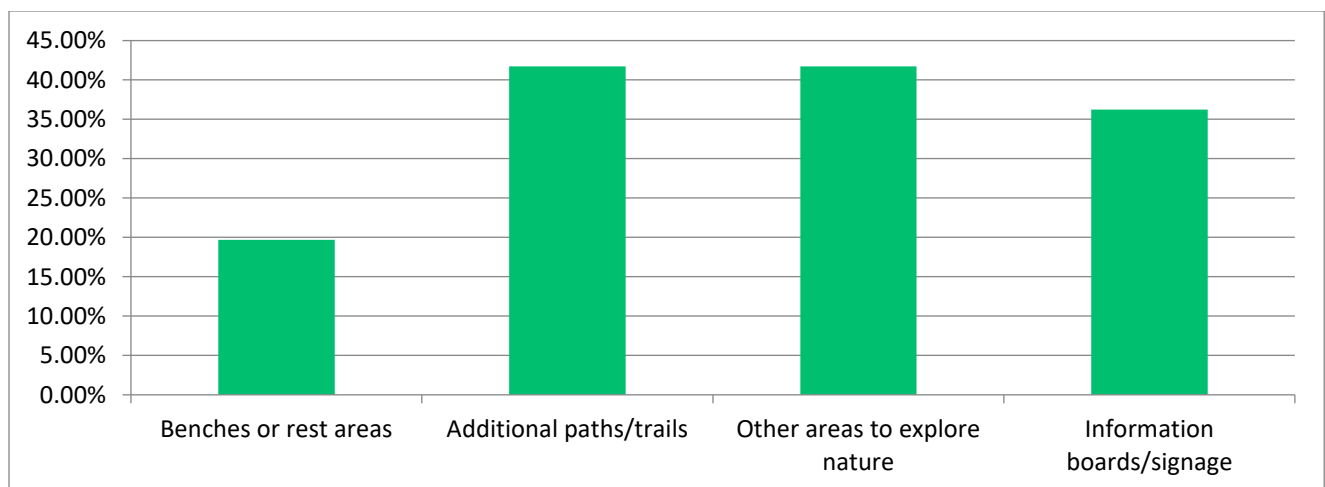
What We Heard Summary

Please rate the importance of the amenities within Parksville Wetlands



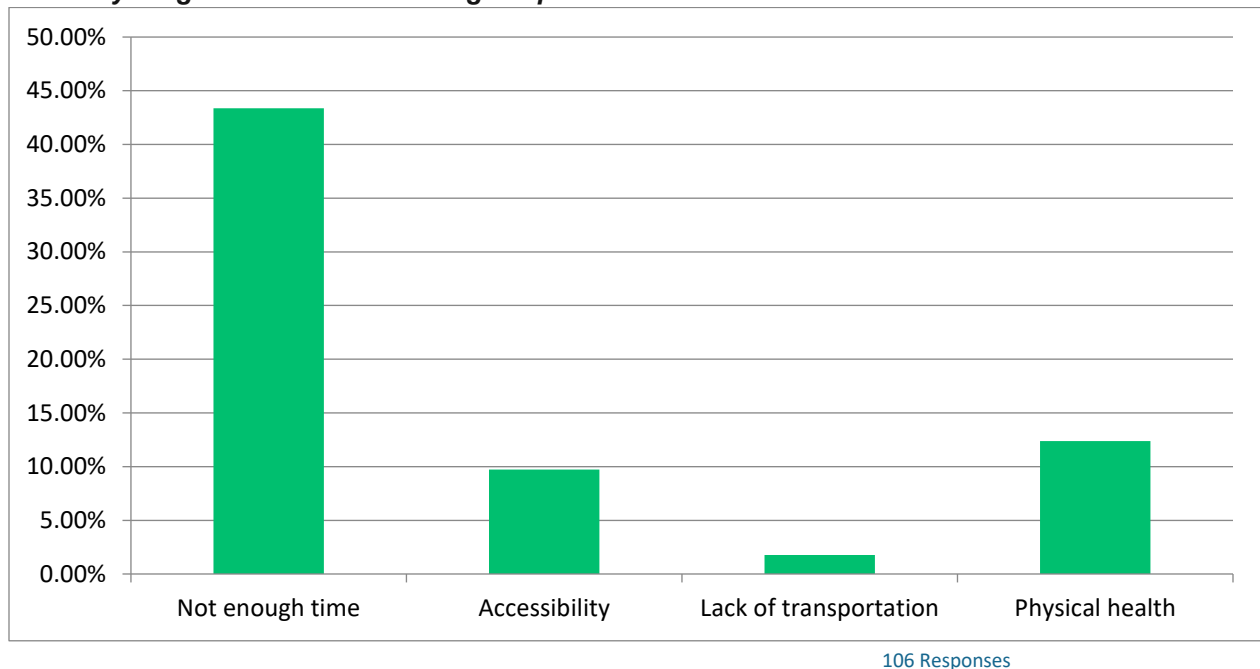
143 Responses

What would encourage you to use the park more often?



73 Responses

What is your greatest barrier to using the park?



4. KEY THEMES

During the engagement process, we heard a variety of perspectives and thoughts on a wide range of topics related to current strengths, challenges, opportunities, and priorities for the Parksville Wetlands.

The top priority identified during the first phase of engagement highlighted the importance of restoration and preservation of the Parksville Wetlands. Many comments were shared through the interviews, open house and survey on the importance of keeping the wetlands as natural as possible while promoting the importance of the water system, native plants and removal and control of invasive species and protecting wildlife habitat. The engagement also highlighted the importance of education, consultation with the community and identified maintenance areas for the wetlands.

The key themes that emerged from the perspectives shared have been organized into five core areas: restoration and preservation, protection, education, consultation, and maintenance.

1. Restoration and Preservation of Wetlands
 - a. Groundwater protection (hydrology)
 - b. Control invasive plants
 - c. Promote native plantings
 - d. Wildlife habitat protection

2. Protect Wetlands
 - a. Keep as natural as possible, do not overdevelop
 - b. Consider boardwalks to protect wetlands, waterflow and wildlife movement
 - c. Consider fencing and education to prevent access to off-path areas for people and pets
3. Education
 - a. Interpretive education on the value of the wetlands
 - i. Environment, biodiversity, plants and wildlife
 - ii. Water systems and connection to Parksville's water supply
 - b. Involve schools, teachers and community organizations
 - c. First Nations history, use and language
 - d. Additional signage (education, way finding)
4. Consultation
 - a. Importance of the City in working with the community to develop the Park Management Plan for Parksville Wetlands. Concern from lack of consultation in the wetlands in the past.
 - b. Use local knowledge, involve First Nations and encourage involvement from local stewardship organizations
5. Maintenance
 - a. Complete trail work, fix bridge, and remove construction debris
 - b. Control drainage to prevent drying
 - c. Ensure trails are accessible in all seasons
 - d. Plant at appropriate times and remove invasive species (hogweed by the bridge, canary grass)
 - e. Additional garbage cans and doggy bags
 - f. Fire safety for the park and neighbouring properties including monitoring for encampments and parties

"Protecting and valuing the wetlands for what they are and keeping them in their natural state in order to continue to provide wildlife habitat."

A survey participant shares their top priority for the Parksville Wetlands

5. NEXT STEPS

Thank you to everyone for taking the time to share your experiences and insights with us!

These responses will provide guidance in developing Parkville Wetlands Park Management Plan.

More opportunities to engage with residents and stakeholders on the draft Park Management Plan will be coming up September 2023 to early 2024. To stay informed, please visit [Parkville Wetlands - Park Management Plan | Let's Talk Parkville \(letstalkparkville.ca\)](https://www.letstalkparkville.ca)



6. ADDITIONAL INFORMATION & RESOURCES PROVIDED TO THE PROJECT TEAM

- **Survey of the red-listed plant species, *Epilobium densiflorum*: its locations and populations in the Parksville Wetlands**
- [Biota of the Parksville Wetlands](#), Vancouver Island, BC Revised 2022-07-15, Prepared by Kent Brothers, Terry Taylor, Iris Bitterlich, & Karen Romanyk.
- **Native Vascular Plants Observed in Eminskin Park, Parksville Wetlands.** From the railroad tracks to Coldwater Road, on June 24, 2023. By Terry Taylor, Karen Romanyk, Iris Bitterlich, Adrian Limpus, and Laura Gilbert.
- **Lower Englishman River Watershed Wetlands Study**, Environmental report with maps, site descriptions and conservation assessment for wetlands located in selected portions of the Lower Englishman River Watershed December 22, 2015, Research and Report by Christopher M. Stephens Consulting For Mid Vancouver Island Habitat Enhancement Society & GW Solutions Inc.
- [Our Oceanside Water - Our Oceanside Water](#)
- Recommendation to reach out to the Ministry of Environment – Neil Goehler, for Hydrology information