



Regional Board Policy

PARKS HAZARD TREE AND TREE MANAGEMENT POLICY

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Office of Primary Responsibility: Parks Services		
Date Approved: September 9, 2021		Date to be Reviewed: 2026, or as required
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PURPOSE:

- 1.1 To outline the Regional District’s approach to addressing hazard tree management within the actively programmed and managed regional and community park service program sites wholly or in part in RDCO parks where the public is invited to recreate; as well as in non-actively human activity programmed areas in regional and community park sites in which there are rare negative interfaces between trees located in the parks and the public or employees and Regional District.
- 1.2 This policy will guide the inspection and management of trees in regional and community park sites wholly or in part in RDCO parks by ensuring that the tree risk assessment process is implemented for all relevant parks areas that have trees located within predominantly high human use activity areas in parks administered by the Regional District of Central Okanagan.

POLICY:

2.1 **Definitions:**

The Department refers to the Parks Services Department, including all management, supervisors and staff that work within the Regional District of Central Okanagan park location including Electoral Area East, Electoral Area West and the KLO head office.

Employee(s) means persons employed by the Regional District including but not limited to regular, temporary and contract employees, and to persons representing or acting on behalf of the Regional District (including but not limited to contractors, volunteers and students).

Regional District means the Regional District of Central Okanagan.

Tree means a woody perennial plant usually having a single or multi trunk or stem which has a diameter of at least 10 centimetres when measured from a height of 1.4 metres above the natural grade of the land and with an overall height of at least 3 metres. The root system of a tree is considered an integral and vital part of tree.

Hazard Tree means a tree has a structural defect that may cause the tree or portion of the tree to fail. A defective tree in the middle of the forest or an open field, away from paths or public use areas will not have to be considered a hazard.

Qualified Tree Assessor means a Regional District employee or external party who is qualified and certified under a Province of BC approved program for parks and recreation sites to conduct a tree risk assessment and make recommendations for abatement of risks where a tree is assessed as a hazard tree within a parks and recreation site setting.

Removal means to cut down.

Modify means to cut and remove a portion of the tree.

Regional District Parks and Trails means the community and regional parks and trails within the Regional Districts inventory. This also includes sites that may or may not be owned by the Regional District of Central Okanagan where the Regional District has a management responsibility for an amenity on that site.

Management Agreement Lands means the RDCO owns the land and provides it for the use of the local community, though it is managed by other parties, usually municipal or regional governments.

POLICY STATEMENT:

3.1 Inspection and Management of Trees in Parks and Trails

Inspection of Trees

Trees located in forested areas of regional, community parks and management agreement lands where the public are invited to recreate, or other park areas which are closed to the public, will only be inspected and any identified hazard trees managed upon receipt of a notice, whether from Regional District Parks Department staff or the public, in which the party has set out a concern regarding perceived dangers posed by the tree including the specific location of the tree and subsequently the tree has been identified by a qualified hazard tree assessor as having potential hazardous tree characteristics.

Where Regional District Parks and Trails contain previously identified trees for which a failure could result in:

- personal injury; and/or,
- damage to assets,

the Regional District will maintain an inventory of the hazard trees setting out the Tree Risk Rating of the trees and an inspection schedule commensurate with the Tree Risk Rating.

Where Regional District Parks and Trails contain trees which have not yet been inspected for inclusion in an inventory of identified potentially hazardous trees, the Regional District will inspect and manage these trees upon receipt of a notice, whether from Regional District Parks Department staff or the public, in which the party has set out a concern regarding perceived dangers posed by the tree including the specific location of the tree and subsequently the tree has been identified by a qualified hazard tree assessor as having potential hazardous tree characteristics. The Regional District will include the newly identified tree in an updated inventory of the hazard trees setting out the Tree Risk Rating of the trees and an inspection schedule commensurate with the Tree Risk Rating.

Management of Trees

Tree management decisions will be based on worker safety and risk management strategies for visitor safety, balanced with the responsibility to manage the resource for conservation values.

Conservation of viable, natural vegetation ecosystems in the Regional District's parks systems will predominantly take precedence over their use by people.

Permanent or temporary closures of selected areas are appropriate management strategies for reducing or eliminating undesirable impacts of human use on critical vegetation features.

Endangered, threatened and vulnerable species whose habitats occur in parks will receive high priority management attention, with an emphasis on protection.

3.2 Hazard Tree Modification or Removal Actions

Where a tree has been assessed and deemed as a hazard tree, modification or removal actions will be undertaken in accordance with the recommendations of a Qualified Tree Assessor in order to achieve the following broad objectives:

- a) Reduce or remove the risk to Regional District staff and the public;
- b) Protect the Regional District and private property infrastructure and other assets;
- c) Enhance and maintain healthy park forested habitats and ecosystems.

3.3 Joint Property

Trees are considered joint property of the Regional District and another property owner when any part of the tree trunk crosses a shared property line at grade and is exclusive of the aerial parts of a tree, including branches and trunks. For example, a tree trunk being located entirely within an Regional District park or trail but that has aerial parts growing over a private property is not a joint property and the sole property of the Regional District. Trees as joint property require all owners to agree on any pruning or removal of any part of the tree, including roots and generally share the cost of any tree work performed on a joint property tree.

3.4 Tree Planting

The planting of trees, shrubs or other vegetation in the Regional District parks and trails by property owners, residents or visitor is prohibited, unless authorized by a member of the Regional District Parks Department management team. The Regional District reserves the right to remove vegetation that has been planted in Regional District parks and trails without permission or notice. The planting of trees, shrubs or other vegetation is subject to fines as detailed in the RDCO's Park Use Regulation Bylaw and Community Parks Bylaw.

3.5 Tree Pruning in Regional District Parks and Trails

The pruning or removal of a tree is the sole responsibility of the Regional District and its authorized agents. The pruning or removal of a tree, including root pruning, without the Regional Districts permission is subject to fines as detailed in RDCO's Park Use Regulation Bylaw and Community Parks Bylaw.

3.6 Applications to Permit the Pruning or Removal of a Tree in Parks and Trails

The Regional Districts policy is to retain trees in our parks and trails where practical. However, a resident may apply for the trimming, pruning or removal of trees in the Regional Districts Parks by:

- 3.6.1 Applications are made by contacting the Regional Districts Parks Services Main Office.
- 3.6.2 The pruning or removal of a healthy tree in parks and trails is a private benefit to the property owner. All costs for the approved pruning or removal of a tree in parks and trails, as determined by the Manager of Park Operations, will be at the expense of the applicant.
- 3.6.3 Applicants must be an owner of a property located in the Regional District of Central Okanagan and must have owned the property for a continuous period of no less than 1 year.
- 3.6.4 Written rationale describing the reasons justifying the request to prune or remove a tree in parks and trails must be submitted to Manager of Park Operations or designate for consideration.
- 3.6.5 A final decision on an application to prune or remove a tree in the Regional District's parks and trails will be made in a timely manner by the Manager of Park Operations, whose decision is final.

RELATED POLICIES, PROCEDURES, AND/OR AGREEMENTS:

- Parks Hazard Tree Operational Procedure

***** END OF POLICY *****