



**REGIONAL
DISTRICT
NORTH
OKANAGAN**

Parks, Trails & Natural Spaces Operations and Maintenance Policy

November 24, 2021



1. BACKGROUND

The Regional District of North Okanagan (RDNO) operates and maintains various parks, trails & natural spaces throughout the North Okanagan that vary considerably in their purpose, amenities, and level of use. All parks, trails and natural spaces are operated and maintained by RDNO staff, contractors and/or volunteers.

RDNO parks and trails are regularly maintained during the operating season (April 1- October 31), and not maintained during the winter season (November 1 – March 31); however, some access points receive snow removal of parking areas, building maintenance, garbage collection, and filling of dog bag dispensers during the winter months. RDNO natural spaces are not maintained at any time throughout the year.

In some cases, the RDNO owns the land on which a park, trail or natural space is located. In other instances, the RDNO has entered into a long-term agreement, lease, or registered right-of-way with either the Government of Canada, Province of BC, local first nation, member municipality, or private landowner.

The RDNO conducts regular park and trail maintenance, scheduled inspections, and responds to public complaints to provide safe and functional sites. This document and the attached inspection checklists will provide RDNO staff, contractors, and volunteers with the general information and tools necessary to maintain the level of service prescribed by the RDNO Board of Directors.

2. RATIONALE

The RDNO Parks, Trails & Natural Spaces Operations and Maintenance Policy (O&M Policy) is based on the foundation that operations, maintenance, and inspections are essential for providing safe and functional sites. Well maintained sites offer quality recreational experiences to visitors and residents. In turn, these amenities are well used and enjoyed. It also recognizes that resources are limited and establishes an appropriate standard of care.

Having a written policy ensures a clear and documented set of standards to enable uniformity in service delivery. Written policy also creates a level of transparency for the public: communicating service-level standards and helping to manage service expectations, both of which help to mitigate liability and trail use. A policy acts like a guide for existing and new staff or contractors, and provides measures to keep staff, contractors, volunteers, and the public safe.

Risk management is considered the most critical component of this O&M Policy, as illustrated in Figure 1. Risk management can be defined as the process of analyzing exposure to risk and taking steps to best mitigate such exposure.

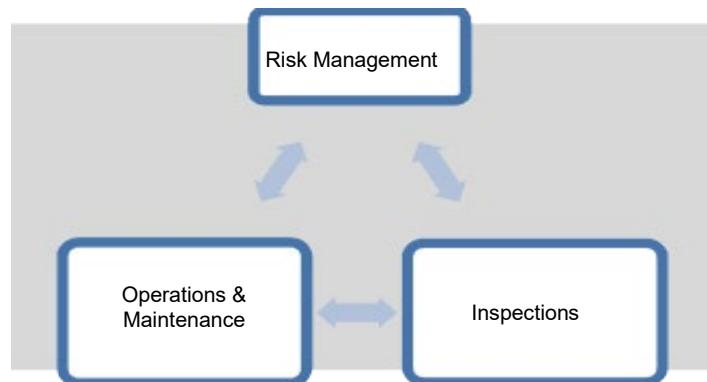


Figure 1 – RDNOs O&M Policy has risk management as its foundation

By applying risk management to the O&M Policy for parks and trails & natural spaces, the following objectives are accomplished:

- i) manages for user safety;
- ii) creates quality recreation;
- iii) protects the environment;
- iv) aids in planning budgets and maintenance tasks;
- v) protects investments;
- vi) reduces/limits liability;
- vii) ensures user access and convenience;
- viii) develops consistent and appropriate standards/schedules; and
- ix) maintains RDNO reputation for safe, well run parks trails & natural spaces.

3. OPERATIONS & MAINTENANCE

The operations and maintenance for each site vary widely and can be quite complex. Efficient operations & maintenance at RDNO sites are dependent upon competent and trained staff, contractors and/or volunteers, effective bylaws, and organizational policies. It is also dependent upon quality maintenance and inspections and a timely response to public complaints, which are the primary focus of this document. In the future, the RDNO may wish to establish more formal operations & maintenance standards for each of its sites. Individual park, trail & natural space procedures and standards are not covered within this document.

An effective operations & maintenance program depends on adequate staffing and experience, proper scheduling, regular communication, and the ability to respond to public complaints. The following section provides further details on how the O&M Policy for parks, trails and natural spaces will address maintenance.

3.1 Types of Maintenance

Parks & trails require significant maintenance. Reasons for maintenance at each site vary and may include but are not limited to: addressing health and safety concerns, addressing issues of liability, facility restoration, reducing deterioration, and conforming to a standard or a code.

Maintenance activities also differ widely between parks and trails depending on the type of site, the amount of use, and its designated purpose.

Generally speaking, maintenance at RDNO parks and trails can be grouped into three categories:

- i) Routine/Ongoing Maintenance - refers to the 'day to day' regime of caring for a site, for example: litter pickup, cleaning bathrooms, and grass cutting/trimming. It may also include minor repairs and replacements such as repairing picnic tables, replacing signage, and making repairs to maintenance equipment such as hand tools and lawn mowers.
- ii) Remedial Maintenance - refers to correcting significant defects as well as repairing, replacing, restoring or upgrading major components that have been destroyed, damaged or significantly deteriorated. In some cases, this type of maintenance may be undertaken as a capital project. Remedial maintenance will be undertaken as resources and budgetary constraints allow.
- iii) Winter Maintenance - refers to access points that are maintained during the winter and may require snow clearing, building maintenance, garbage collection and dog bags.

3.2 Maintenance Scheduling

Operating Season: April 1 – October 31

Winter Season: November 1 – March 31

Routine/ongoing and remedial maintenance may be undertaken at any time throughout the season. However, the RDNO will endeavor to complete any remedial maintenance tasks that may impact users (i.e. visitor safety, availability of amenities, user experience) at the beginning of the operating season. Permitting required through the Government of Canada, Province of BC, Agricultural Land Commission or local first nations can affect timing and completion date of projects.

Routine/ongoing maintenance will take place throughout the operating season as required. Much of this work is timed to coincide with the employment of the seasonal staff, contractors, and volunteers.

Routine/ongoing maintenance activities are directed through experienced staff and through the use of inspection checklists. Remedial maintenance is organized through inspection checklists and annual work plans.

3.3 Maintenance Priorities

Parks, trails and park facilities maintenance must be prioritized appropriately. The RDNO has identified the following levels of maintenance priorities. Once a maintenance concern is received via www.rdno.ca/parks-rec-culture “report a problem” a qualified person will be designated to evaluate the priority based on the report and schedule a site inspection as per Table 1. A person will be deemed qualified by the Manager Parks, Rec & Culture based on certification, training, and experience. Once a site inspection is complete an action tracking file will be created for “High Priority” items.

Table 1 – Maintenance Priority Levels:

High	Damage to site infrastructure, superstructure, amenities or to the environment that could compromise user safety, should be evaluated by a qualified person within 5 business days upon discovery. Site closers and repairs are to be scheduled based on the qualified persons recommendations
Moderate	Issues related to user convenience should be corrected and action taken to prevent the development of a problem, decreased use or visitor dissatisfaction in the medium term within four weeks or less upon their discovery.
Low	Issues related to aesthetics are of low, long-term priority and have no timetable to remedy . Although, the urgency may be increased based on public complaints.

3.4 Operations and Maintenance Personnel and Activities

Operations and maintenance will primarily be carried out by RDNO staff and/or contractors. While less common, volunteers may also carry out maintenance activities provided the RDNO has approved the works, and adequate insurance is in place. When contractors or volunteers are involved in operations, maintenance work or projects, RDNO staff will oversee the work. In the case of contracted operations and maintenance, the scope, standards and safety considerations will all be detailed by the RDNO in a contract or service agreement.

The RDNO Manager, Parks, Recreation, and Culture or designate is directly responsible for ensuring that maintenance schedules are being followed, work is being adhered to, and that the parks, trails & natural spaces are functioning as intended. The RDNO will work closely with seasonal parks labourers, contractors, community groups, and volunteers to implement this O&M Policy.

The RDNO will develop an annual work plan that identifies special projects, improvements or upgrades for each park and trail. In some cases, a work plan may include some significant remedial maintenance tasks. Often these tasks are above and beyond those identified in the regular maintenance schedules.

In addition to regular maintenance, the RDNO will ensure parks, trails & natural spaces meet a basic level of standard through regular or complaint/event-driven inspections.

The RDNO does not manage or maintain its parks, trails & natural spaces for wildlife, insects, rodents or pests that may cause concern to park users or adjacent private properties. Such concerns are to be reported to WildsafeBC, BC Conservation Officers Service or Invasive Species Council of BC.

4. INSPECTIONS

Park and trail inspections are an important part of the O&M Policy. The purpose of the inspections is to identify and document all site components, identify and anticipate problems, and enable appropriate corrective actions. In addition to addressing existing and potential issues, inspections allow for adjustments based on changes to the site, user needs, and public feedback. Inspections also demonstrate that the RDNO is actively engaged in risk management.

4.1 Reasons for Inspection

Inspections may take place in one of five situations;

- I. Scheduled – inspections that take place on a regular, pre-determined basis;
- II. Non-scheduled – inspections that take place if and when time allows;
- III. Public feedback – inspections that occur as a result of information the RDNO or its contractors have received from the public through a complaint, question or concern.
- IV. Accident/incident – inspections that occur as a result of a recent accident or incident involving the general public, a user group, contractor or RDNO staff.
- V. Significant weather event – inspections that occur following a significant weather event that in the opinion of the RDNO, is likely to have caused damage to a site.

4.2 Inspectors

Inspections are to be completed by the designated RDNO staff or when permitted by RDNO contractors, or volunteers. All inspections must be completed by a qualified person, familiar with the park, trail and natural spaces, and the O&M Policy.

4.3 Inspection Frequency

Type	Frequency	Criteria
Scheduled Park/Trail Inspection	1/year	Required for all parks and trails in the spring to ensure that urgent issues are remediated to reduce liability and ensure public safety and user satisfaction.
Scheduled Playground Inspection	3/year	Required for all playgrounds in the spring, summer and fall. Must be completed by a certified playground inspector through the Canadian Parks & Recreation Association

Scheduled Danger Tree Assessment	1/year	Required for all parks and trails in the spring. Must be completed by a certified BC Wildlife Danger Tree Assessor. Additional inspections may occur if a concern or suspect tree is identified.
Complaint Based	N/A	Required as per section 3.3 Table 1 - Maintenance Priority Levels

4.4 Inspection Checklists

It is important that inspections be cost effective, consistent and yield useful information to RDNO staff. Because of the varying purposes and amenities at each park and trail, a generic site inspection checklist is not appropriate. As such, site-specific, detailed inspection checklists have been developed to consistently address differences between each site. Inspection checklists will be used for all park and trail inspections. A list of inspection checklists is provided below and all inspection checklists are attached to this document.

- Trails
- Parks
- Boat Launches
- Playgrounds

Inspection checklists are intended as a guide only and should not limit the use of good judgment by the Inspector in the field. These checklists, while extremely detailed are not comprehensive and may be revised or expanded by the Manager, Parks, Recreation & Culture or designate when it is deemed necessary and as more parks, trails & natural spaces are added.

4.5 Procedure

Park and trail inspections should be completed systematically by a qualified person to ensure consistency. When possible, the Inspector should systematically work throughout the site; from entry to exit, area to area, building to building, etc. to gain a better perspective of potential concern and issues. It is also important that the Inspector be familiar with the site and the O&M Policy.

The inspection checklist must be completed at the time of the inspection. If there are safety hazards or issues that can be rectified at the time of inspection, the Inspector should rectify the hazard or issue and document on the inspection checklist. The Inspector may also photograph the hazard or issue for future reference. Overall, the inspection checklists will provide important information to guide maintenance priorities (Section 3.3) and maintenance activities in the future.

Once completed in the field, the Inspector will save the completed form to the file. Inspectors may use previously completed checklists when revisiting the sites.

END