



Furry Creek

Community Association

Furry Creek

Beaches, Trails, and Open Spaces

January 26, 2018



1. Executive Overview

The ***Furry Creek: Beaches, Trails, and Open Spaces*** document provides some historical perspective on recreational amenities at Furry Creek. It identifies the following community priorities:

1. Four Open Spaces projects collectively associated with the “front door” to Furry Creek (Section 3)
2. Expansion of the current trail that provides public access to the Furry Creek beach area to form a loop trail that will also address access and safety concerns. (Section 4.1)
3. Further planning and development of a more comprehensive trail network that will provide a major recreational amenity for both residents and visitors to our community (Section 4.2)
4. Construction of a bridge to connect the next phase of proposed development on the south side of Furry Creek should include consideration for pedestrian traffic and connections with current and proposed trails on either side of Furry Creek (Section 4.2)
5. The old growth trees that border the south beach will require special management to ensure they are closely monitored while also undertaking reforestation measures that will allow for natural replacement cycles of this environmentally significant vegetation (Section 5.1)
6. Explore the options for more public amenities such as a picnic area and public washroom facility in the public access Right Of Way on the north side of the 14th hole and immediately adjacent to the beach (Section 5.3)
7. All park and public access should be developed with consideration given to residents’ needs for privacy and enjoyment of their homes and property (Section 2)

The FCCA appreciates that Fine Peace is taking the initiative to involve the community in the planning of their future development plans for Furry Creek. We offer these proposals in the spirit of this collaborative process and realize they require further discussion and refinement to make them a reality. Successful developments realize it is necessary to work with the local residents who have already made a significant and long-term commitment to Furry Creek.

2. Introduction

Furry Creek, its estuary and the rare sandy beach, the largest in Howe Sound, is an important community asset and a valuable element of the greater Sea to Sky (STS) corridor. Furry Creek beach is also a marine way station on the Trans Canada Trail and the location of an important bi-annual sport fishery.

The Sound, after many decades of industrial activity is rapidly recovering its former ecological richness and is a proposed UNESCO biosphere reserve. Herring have returned to spawn in large numbers which in turn has generated visits by seals, large schools of dolphins, and local killer whale pods.



Tourist attractions -- Britannia Beach Mining Museum, Sea to Sky Gondola, Railway Heritage Park, Whistler -- and recreational activities -- hiking, rock climbing, mountain biking, windsurfing, skiing -- have also expanded dramatically in the corridor. Furry Creek is located in the epicentre of this world-class tourism destination that is renowned for its rugged, natural beauty. It is important that development in Furry Creek aims for the ideal balance between community development while protecting and preserving our beautiful natural environment. Ready access to boundless opportunities for outdoor recreation and ecotourism within the STS will be an important draw for future home buyers in our community.

The FCCA appreciates that Fine Peace is taking the initiative to involve the community in the planning of their future development plans for Furry Creek. All park and public access should be developed with consideration given to residents' needs for privacy and enjoyment of their homes and property. We are more than willing to share our perspectives and knowledge to ensure that any development reflects the needs of all parties.

3. Furry Creek: Open Spaces Initiatives

The Squamish Lillooet Regional District (SLRD) provides an annual budget of \$43,000 (2016/17) for Open Spaces maintenance in Furry Creek. The budget covers grass, bushes, trees (i.e. organic stuff) that are mowed, pruned, and/or cut. The FCCA appoints a community member who serves as the Open Spaces Coordinator and works closely with SLRD staff to ensure the ongoing maintenance work is done in a satisfactory and timely manner.

Historically, the two major developers in Furry Creek have also supported Open Spaces work in various ways, but this has diminished significantly in recent years. The Furry Creek Golf Course is to be commended for their ongoing commitment to mowing the large grassy area adjacent to the northbound exit for Furry Creek.

Special Open Spaces initiatives are also regularly identified and one or more may be included as part of the SLRD annual budget along with other potential funding sources. Some of these are one-time maintenance/remediation proposals; others have ongoing implications for the Furry Creek Open Spaces program and budget. Currently, there are a number of proposals that are collectively associated with the "front door" to Furry Creek and would have the maximum visual impact for the overall community -- "First Impressions are lasting impressions."

All four projects are located in the general proximity of the northbound "entrance" to Furry Creek. The second proposed project: Northbound Entrance: Northwest Area is the most significant one. It would also bring this area up to a comparable level to the other two landscaped areas adjacent to the T-intersection -- the planted area adjacent to the mailboxes, and the Southwest area. The FCCA would like to invite Fine Peace to participate and/or contribute to these projects.

3.1 Furry Creek Sign – Northbound on Hwy.99

This is the large faux rock sign immediately adjacent to the Northbound Entrance to Furry Creek. Trees and bushes are starting to encroach on the sign, and some remedial work is required on the faux rock (note missing piece from “R” on north facing side).



3.2. Northbound Entrance: NorthWest Area

This is the rectangular open area approx. 70' X 150' that currently has a formal planting of some trees and bushes in the centre. It has been poorly maintained by the responsible landscaping contractors, one of whom decimated this area by cutting almost everything to the ground including some of the plantings done as part of the Sea to Sky highway project. It requires some major remediation work, plus the ongoing maintenance arrangements for it need review.



3.3. Northbound Entrance: “Discovery Centre”

This area is approximately 60' X 30' and previously occupied by the Discovery Centre building until its demolition several years ago. It is immediately behind the landscaped beds adjacent to the mailboxes which are currently maintained as part of the Open Spaces program. Furry Creek Golf Club currently mows the grass. FCCA recently purchased and planted 3 trees in this area.

One issue with this area is its continuing use as an outdoor washroom by travellers. Consideration should be given to landscaping options that would make this area more attractive while also deterring its unintended use.



3.4. Pedestrian Underpass: East Entrance

As part of the Sea to Sky highway project, two heather beds approx. 10' X 15' were planted on either side of the entrance. They have not been looked after and are now completely overgrown. The two heather beds need to be restored and then properly maintained under the Open Spaces program.



4. Trails and Public Access

Green space and pedestrian friendly walkways are an important amenity in all major community developments. The Univercity development adjacent to Simon Fraser University, Squamish Corridor Trail and the Resort Municipality of Whistler are three excellent examples where careful attention has been paid to these requirements. The end result is a community where residents can enjoy the beauty of the local natural environment, interact with their neighbours, and reduce reliance on automobiles.

Many of the trails in the STS corridor are the results of the collective efforts of local residents working with a wide variety of non-profit partners and outdoor recreation organizations: the Streamkeepers, Future of Howe Sound Society, Squamish Access Society, Squamish Off-Road Cycling Association, and the Squamish Watershed Society. These initiatives also rely on the support of public and private land managers. The resulting trail network not only serves the recreational needs of local residents but contributes significantly to the growing reputation of the STS corridor as a world-class tourist destination.

Carefully planned and properly engineered trails and walkways not only minimize the impact on the immediate environment but also ensure that increased recreational use in any area is properly constrained and directed. It prevents the creation of ad hoc trails and the inadvertent destruction of additional vegetation.

The Furry Creek Community Association has followed this model to commence the development of a more extensive public trail system in our community (See Section 5 below). This initial work has been prompted by the need to provide a safer and less intrusive way for residents and others to access the public beach at Furry Creek. So far, all of this has been accomplished through volunteer efforts and small financial contributions from the FCCA and the SLRD. But much remains to be done. The Furry Creek Golf Course also contributed to some critical trail development for beach access when the flood mitigation work was completed several years ago.

Furry Creek has some major challenges that must be taken into account for trail and walkway development. Our community is bisected by both a major highway and railway and all of the safety hazards associated with them. The golf course and its cart trails are very tempting shortcuts for many wanting to access the public beach areas, especially when clearly marked trail alternatives are not available. And achieving the right balance between public walkways and residential areas can be contentious if careful consideration is not given to the placement and proximity of access routes.

The FCCA would like to work with Fine Peace on the development of a more comprehensive trail network that will provide public access and recreational benefits while also ensuring that safety hazards and other challenges are adequately addressed:

4.1 Phase 1

The current trail that provides public access to the Furry Creek beach area should be extended to form a loop. This will provide access from several directions and enable a more pleasurable walking experience. It will also address the safety concerns posed by the highway and railway and more effectively manage foot traffic adjacent to the golf course, especially on the 14th and 15th holes. This extension will also provide access to the northbound bus pull-off on the highway.

However, it will require the participation of the Furry Creek Golf Course to provide shared access for both carts and pedestrians in two areas. The current trail already shares the golf cart trail that goes under the railway bridge on the south side of Furry Creek. The demarcation of a pedestrians only section along with appropriate signage is needed. The other area that requires a similar solution is the golf cart tunnel that goes under the highway from the 13th to the 14th hole.

The other area that will require careful planning is the routing of the trail through the public right of way on the north side side of the 14th hole plus where the public Right of Way overlaps with the 15th hole. A preliminary inspection of this area indicates it should be feasible to locate the trail in a manner that would redirect foot traffic off the 14th hole and guide it through the 15th in a manner that would optimize the safety of pedestrians (e.g. being hit by a stray golf ball) and minimize liability and the disruption for golfers.

4.2 Phase 2 and on

Furry Creek presents many exciting possibilities for the creation of an extensive trail network that would provide a major recreational amenity for both residents and visitors to our community. For example, it should be feasible to extend the Phase 1 loop trail so that it connects to the Furry Creek Golf Club (and a potential boutique hotel). This would allow guests at the golf course to explore the natural environment of Furry Creek and to access the public beach. It would also enable residents to walk to the Club House and enjoy the golfing, dining and other amenities provided without having to use their vehicles. Similarly, the construction of a bridge to connect the next phase of proposed development on the south side of Furry Creek should include consideration for pedestrian traffic and connections with current and proposed trails on either side of Furry Creek.

5. Furry Creek Beach Recreation Area

5.1 South Beach

Three years ago the golf club erected a chain link fence to block one of the main public access routes to Furry Creek south beach via the level crossing on the CN rail line. The FCCA decided to look into providing better and safer access options to the public waterfront and called a community meeting to confirm support for this initiative. At that meeting it was decided that FCCA director Brian Moorhead, who is active in parks and outdoor recreation advocacy, would coordinate development of a new access trail and other community recreation amenities. Joint funding was provided by the FCCA and the SLRD, thanks to the efforts of Tony Rainbow, our elected representative for SLRD Electoral Area D. Over the ensuing three years using a combination of trusted parks contractors and many volunteers from our own and adjoining communities the project was completed in the Spring of 2017 on schedule and on budget.



This is a good example of a successful, community led initiative that would not have happened without the collective efforts of so many Furry Creek residents and others. The Squamish Climbers Access Society (SAS) made their trail building tools available for the many community

work parties. The Britannia Beach Fire Department provided some "heavy lifting" support for several more demanding tasks. TreeWorks dealt with a hazardous tree and Durante Kreuk Landscape Architects provided valuable advice for the botanical elements in the forested section of the trail, both at no cost to the FCCA. Even a group of students from the Howe Sound Senior Secondary outdoor leadership program pitched in for a weekend work party.



The trail project also provided several amenities at Furry Creek Beach recreation area -- two picnic tables and a large bench all constructed from salvaged beach logs and featuring live edge cut cedar slabs. All of them provide outstanding views of Furry Creek beach and Howe Sound.



One environmental feature that has important stewardship requirements is the strip of large mature evergreens that border the entire length of the South Beach. They provide a natural habitat for the eagles, vultures, herons, and other birds that frequent the beach. Some of these trees are very mature and a number have come down during the past few years. In turn, this exposes adjacent trees to the elements in a manner that might hasten their demise. This area will require special management to ensure that old growth is closely monitored while also undertaking reforestation measures that will allow for natural replacement cycles of this environmentally significant vegetation.

5.2 North Beach

Although the north beach adjacent to Olivers Landing is less popular, apart from a short bi-annual recreational fishing season, the same can not be said of the pleasant seawall leading to a viewing platform on the small spit. This is popular with residents and passing tourists and likely to become more so, should some form of store/coffee shop eventually be built across from the Olivers Landing Recreation Centre.

Again, SLRD, FCCA and local residents have worked to improve amenities in this area. Homeowners have at their own expense continued their gardening efforts on the seaward (public) side of the seawall to good effect. A local community group of boating enthusiasts created the attractive and well maintained seasonal dock (OL Boat and Kayak Club). FCCA paid for and installed new high quality benches at the viewing platform. SLRD expended significant public funds to harden the two spits bounding the basin against storm erosion, along with a \$10,000 contribution from the OL Boat and Kayak Club.



At this time there is no public trail connectivity between North and South beach. People frequently use the CN railroad bridge which is both dangerous and illegal. There is an alternate route using the golf course tracks which is also unsatisfactory. The construction of a bridge to connect the next phase of proposed development on the south side of Furry Creek should include consideration for pedestrian traffic and connections with current and proposed trails on either side of Furry Creek.

5.3 Potential Public Amenities: a Public Picnic area with Washrooms

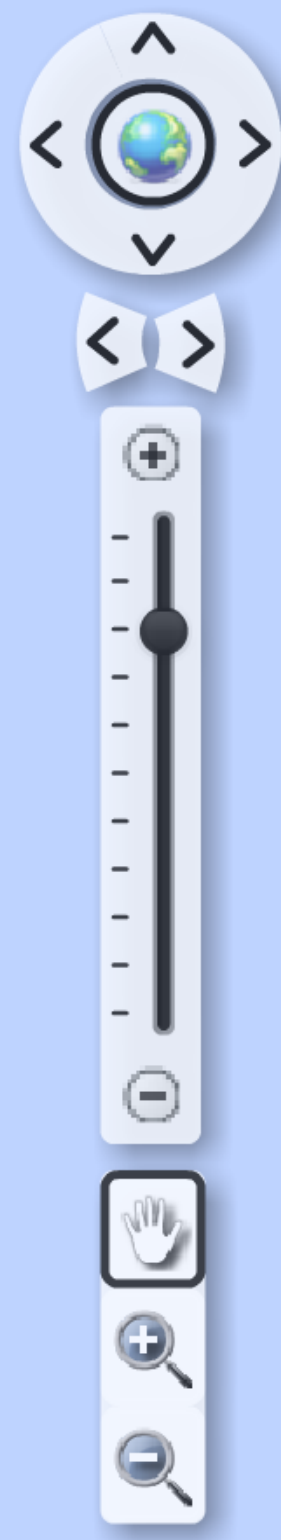
In conjunction with the proposed completion of the loop trail (see Section 4.1 above), the FCCA has discussed during the past few years a number of options to improve the public amenities available at the Furry Creek Beach recreation area. Some suggestions include a public picnic area and/or a public washroom located adjacent to the south beach. This might benefit not only the current residents and visitors to Furry Creek, but also be a feature for new residents in the proposed Fine Peace development. The FCCA would like to explore these options with both the wider community and developers in Furry Creek.

For example, the public access Right Of Way on the north side of the 14th hole includes a large rectangular area approximately 300' X 150' feet in size. It is also immediately adjacent to the beach and with careful planning and landscaping would not impact the residential area nor disrupt golfers on the 14th hole. It could be a good site for a public picnic area and the provision of a public washroom facility. From a development perspective it also has the advantage of not impinging on private property. The FCCA is also aware of ecologically friendly, "low tech" options that are being more widely used in parks and recreational areas and believes this might be an effective solution in this setting.

6. Map

The map included on the next phase outlines the proposed phase 1 loop trail and indicates the potential locations for additional public amenity options such as a picnic area and washrooms. It was prepared using the SLRD Web Map and its GIS technology available on the SLRD Website at: <https://www.slrd.bc.ca/planning-building/mapping>

The SLRD Web Map is linked to databases that store information about land and other features in the SLRD, including property (parcel) information such as ownership, legal descriptions, Parcel Identification Number (PID) and folio data, as well as zoning, Official Community Plan, Agricultural Land Reserve and other geographic information.



Basemap

Communities

Markup Tools

Map Contents

LOOP TRAIL

Pedestrian Tunnel

Public Picnic Site

Public Washroom

Transit

Transit

Golf Cart Tunnel

300 m

1000 ft