

Parks, Trails and Recreation Facilities Operations and Maintenance Policy - Operational



1. Background:

The Regional District of East Kootenay (RDEK) operates and maintains various parks, trails and recreation facilities (also referred to as ‘sites’ throughout this document). RDEK parks, trails and recreation facilities vary considerably in their purpose, amenities and level of use. All parks, trails and recreation facilities are operated and maintained by RDEK staff and/or its contractors. In the near future, it is expected that the RDEK parks, trails and recreation facilities will grow to include other assets.

With the exception of the Exhibition Grounds, Old Coach Trail and Edgewater School Path, none of the parks, trails or recreation facilities are formally operated or maintained during the winter.

In some cases, the RDEK owns the land that a site is located on. In other instances, the RDEK has entered into a long-term lease with either the Provincial Government or other entity to operate a site on Crown or Private land.

The RDEK has always conducted site maintenance and inspections on a regular basis to ensure for safe and functional sites. This document and the attached inspection checklists will provide RDEK staff and contractors with the general information and tools necessary to maintain the prescribed level of service.

2. Rationale:

The Parks, Trails and Recreation Facilities Operations and Maintenance Policy (O&M Policy) is based on the foundation that both maintenance and inspections are essential for safe and functional sites. Well maintained and monitored sites provide high 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.

A policy with a maintenance component and an inspection and documentation process is also critical to proving (in the case of litigation) that a standard of care existed and was adhered to.

Risk management is considered to be the most critical component of the O&M Policy. Risk management can be defined as the process of analyzing exposure to risk and taking steps to best handle such exposure.

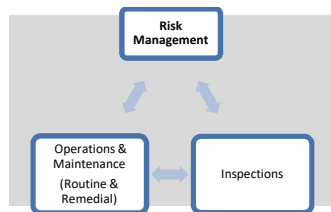


Figure 1 – RDEKs O&M Policy has risk management as its foundation

By applying risk management to the O&M Policy for parks, trails and recreation facilities, the following objectives are accomplished;

- i) Manages for user safety;
- ii) Creates high 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 RDEK reputation for safe, well run parks and recreation facilities.

3. Operations and Maintenance:

The operations for each site vary widely and can be quite complex. Efficient operations at RDEK sites are dependent upon competent and trained staff, effective bylaws and well developed organizational policies. Operations are also dependent upon a quality maintenance and inspection regime, which is the primary focus of this document. In the future, the RDEK may wish to establish more formal operations standards for each of its sites. Individual park, trail and recreation facility operations procedures and standards are not covered within this document.

An effective maintenance program depends on adequate staffing and experience, proper scheduling, regular communication and the ability to prioritize tasks. The following section provides further details as to how the O&M Policy for parks, trails and recreation facilities will address maintenance.

3.1 Types of Maintenance:

Parks, trails and recreation facilities 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, trails and recreation facilities. For example, maintenance tasks and inspection checklists will vary based on the type of site and its designated purpose. RDEK parks, trails and recreation facilities can be categorized as:

- i) Regional and Electoral Area Parks and Lake Accesses;
- ii) Trails;
- iii) Boat Launches;
- iv) Exhibition Grounds; and
- v) Ballparks

Generally speaking, maintenance at RDEK parks, trails and recreation facilities 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 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 sites that are formally operated or maintained during the winter and may require snow clearing. The RDEK will initiate the snow clearing process from winter maintained trails periodically throughout the winter season and within 72 hours of receiving a complaint that the accumulative snow depth is 5 cm or more.

3.2 Operations and Maintenance Scheduling:

Routine/ongoing and remedial maintenance may be undertaken at any time throughout the field season. However, the RDEK will endeavor to complete any remedial maintenance tasks that may impact users (i.e. visitor safety, availability of amenities, user experience) before the beginning of the high season. The high season is considered to begin on July 1st annually for all sites. In many cases, it will be desirable to complete maintenance work in the early spring. Refer to Figure 3 in Section 3.4 which provides a list of suggested maintenance activities to be completed prior to the high season at each park, trail and recreation facility.

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 and contractors, who are typically employed between early Spring and late Fall.

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 Operations & Maintenance Priorities:

Parks, trails and recreation facilities maintenance must be prioritized appropriately. The RDEK has identified the following levels of maintenance urgency;

Figure 2 – Operations and Maintenance Priority Levels:

Extreme	Upon discovery, safety hazards must either be repaired, signage must be installed, or the affected site (or part thereof) must be closed within 72 hours of the RDEK receiving the report.
High	Damage to site infrastructure, superstructure, amenities or to the environment should be marked or flagged within 72 hours upon discovery and repaired or corrected and action taken to prevent further damage within two weeks of being marked .
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 be carried out by RDEK staff and/or contractors. While less common, volunteers may also carry out maintenance activities provided the RDEK has previously approved the arrangement and adequate insurance is in place. When contractors or volunteers are involved in operations or maintenance work or projects, RDEK staff will oversee the work in some capacity. In the case of contracted operations and maintenance, the scope, standards and safety considerations will all be detailed by the RDEK in a contract or service agreement.

The RDEK Recreation & Control Services Supervisor and Recreation Services Supervisor (Supervisors) are directly responsible for ensuring that maintenance schedules are being followed, work is being completed to an adequate standard and that operation at the parks, trails or recreation facilities are functioning as intended. These individuals will work closely with the Parks Foreman, Seasonal Parks Labourers and Attendants, contractors and volunteers to implement this O&M Policy.

Each year, an annual work plan will be developed which identifies special projects, improvements or upgrades for each park, trail and recreation facility. 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.

As outlined previously, routine/ongoing maintenance can be completed throughout the operating season. Remedial maintenance, special projects and upgrades may need to be completed prior to July 1st; limiting liability and disruptions to visitor experience. The following table provides a recommended list of general maintenance items which should be addressed prior to the high season.

Figure 3 – Recommended Spring Maintenance Schedule

Regional and Electoral Area Parks and Lake Accesses
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Access roads, parking lot – preventative maintenance, upgrades and repairs2. Dust control (as needed), grading of access roads, parking lots3. All signage in place4. All park structures – preventative maintenance, upgrades and repairs5. All park buildings – preventative maintenance, upgrades and repairs6. Washrooms/outhouses – preventative maintenance, upgrades and repairs7. Washrooms/outhouses – septic pumped out as needed8. Water taps & irrigation systems – operational, preventative maintenance, upgrades and repairs9. Port-a-Potties – installed on site, stocked, pumped and ready to use10. Sports facilities & playground equipment – preventative maintenance, upgrades and repairs11. Trails – preventative maintenance, upgrades and repairs12. Waterfront – swimming area; including buoys, lines and rafts – secured, preventative maintenance, upgrades and repairs13. Danger tree assessment and removal14. Other vegetation management – particularly invasive plant control (may also be completed in the fall), trimming of vegetation that is obstructing roads, trails, structures, sightlines

Trails
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Clear windfalls, slides, loose rocks, debris from tread surface, assess/remove danger trees 2. Drainage repair including but not limited to – culverts, water bars, washouts, pooling 3. Vegetation control – if it hinders sightlines, obstruct the trail/signage, invasive plant control (may also be completed in the fall) 4. Re-vegetation of slopes, ground disturbance 5. Check trail surface & level or restore as required – riling, slumping, tire ruts, holes, cracking, low spots and exposed rocks/roots 6. Check and repair all structures including bridges, boardwalks, steps, handrails, fencing, gates, stiles, walk-thru's, barriers/bollards, benches/seating, cattle guards, retaining walls and technical trail features 7. Check, repair or replace kiosks, signs, emergency numbering and trail markers 8. Access roads, parking lot – preventative maintenance, upgrades and repairs 9. Maintain trailhead structures – i.e. bathrooms, garbage cans, maps/kiosks
Boat Launches
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Access roads, parking lot – preventative maintenance, upgrades and repairs 2. Dust control (as needed), grading of access roads, parking lots 3. All signage in place 4. Drainage of site – preventative maintenance, upgrades and repairs 5. Outhouses – preventative maintenance, upgrades and repairs 6. Outhouses – septic pumped out 7. Boat ramp – preventative maintenance, upgrades and repairs 8. Floating dock, walkway, piers – preventative maintenance, upgrades and repairs 9. Rip, rap – preventative maintenance, upgrades and repairs 10. Danger Tree assessment and removal 11. Other vegetation management – particularly invasive plant control (may also be completed in the fall), trimming of vegetation that is obstructing roads, trails, structures, sightlines 12. Perimeter trench/rock wall – preventative maintenance, upgrades and repairs
Exhibition Grounds
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Parking lot & access roads – preventative maintenance, upgrades and repairs 2. Perimeter fencing – preventative maintenance, upgrades and repairs 3. Emergency exit – accessible, grass cut and ready to use 4. All signage in place 5. All buildings – preventative maintenance, upgrades and repairs 6. All structures – preventative maintenance, upgrades and repairs 7. Washrooms/Outhouses – septic pumped out 8. Water system – disinfected, operational and compliant with IHA standards 9. Rodeo/Exhibition Arena & Structures – arena surface worked, safe, free of rocks and debris 10. Rodeo/Exhibition Arena & Structures – preventative maintenance, upgrades and repairs 11. Danger Tree assessment and removal 12. Other vegetation management – particularly invasive plant control (may also be completed in the fall), trimming of vegetation that is obstructing roads, trails, structures, sightlines
Ballparks
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Parking area – preventative maintenance, upgrades and repairs 2. Irrigation system – preventative maintenance, upgrades and repairs 3. All signage in place 4. Infield surface – leveled and material added 5. Backstop – preventative maintenance, upgrades and repairs 6. Invasive plant control (may also be completed in the fall) 7. Base layout – preventative maintenance, upgrades and repairs, measured & aligned as per slo-pitch and baseball regulations 8. Outfield surface – low spots or holes filled with topsoil, seeded

9. Perimeter fencing – preventative maintenance, upgrades and repairs
10. Foul-line posts, gates – preventative maintenance, upgrades and repairs
11. Protective netting – secured, preventative maintenance, upgrades and repairs
12. Dugouts – preventative maintenance, upgrades and repairs
13. Spectator Area – preventative maintenance, upgrades and repairs
14. Port-a-Potties – installed on site, stocked, pumped and ready to use
15. Concession – preventative maintenance, upgrades and repairs (both appliances & structure)

3.5 Specialized Maintenance Equipment:

Maintenance work that requires specialized equipment should either be rented by the RDEK or contracted out to competent operators. The purchase of any such equipment should be avoided if possible, as it is unlikely to provide a return on investment.

Where warranted, a cost-benefit analysis of a potential purchase should be completed in order to make a more informed decision.

3.6 Maintenance Best Practices and Legislative Requirements:

Whenever possible and financially prudent, the RDEK and its contractors will utilize best practices in the operation and maintenance of its parks, trails and recreation facilities. Best practices should be employed from a safety, environmental and social perspective. Construction and design standards should also be applied where reasonably possible.

All RDEK operations and maintenance activities shall comply with all federal, provincial, municipal and local laws, bylaws and regulations.

4. Inspections:

Park, trail and recreation facility inspections are critical to the O&M Policy. The purpose of the inspections is to identify and document all components of the site, to identify and anticipate problems and enable appropriate corrective action to be taken. In addition to addressing existent and potential problems, inspections allow for adjustments based on changes to site user needs and public feedback. Inspections also demonstrate that the RDEK is actively engaged in risk management.

4.1 Reasons for Inspection

Inspections may take place in one of four 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 RDEK 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 RDEK staff.
- v) **Significant weather event** – inspections that occur following a significant weather event that in the opinion of the Supervisor, is likely to have caused damage to a site.

4.2 Inspectors

Inspections are to be completed by Supervisors or the Parks Foreman who are familiar with the park, trail or recreational facility and the O&M Policy. In some cases, RDEK Parks Labourers and Attendants can also conduct inspections. In rare circumstances, a contractor may be able to conduct an inspection on behalf of the RDEK provided that both parties are comfortable with this arrangement and the contractor is familiar with the site, the inspection checklist and its overall intent. This situation may be encountered if RDEK staff cannot conduct a scheduled inspection in the required timeframe.

Supervisors will conduct site inspections, with the exception of Wycliffe Regional Park and Wycliffe Exhibition Grounds, which may be inspected by the Parks Foreman.

4.3 Inspection Frequency

All parks, trails and recreation facilities will be scheduled for inspections once in the spring and once in the fall. Spring scheduled inspections will take place prior to the high season of a site to ensure that urgent issues are remediated to reduce liability, ensure public safety and user satisfaction. Fall scheduled inspections will identify site issues and requirements for annual work plans and budgeting.

Additional non-scheduled inspections may take place throughout the year and may include inspections in the closed or off season. The purpose of off season inspections is to inspect for any major damage or vandalism. While it is always preferable to complete an inspection in its entirety, inspections taking place during the off season may be partially completed since there is no authorized public use and many of the amenities and systems are not accessible or turned on. For items not inspected during this time, the inspector simply checks the 'Not Inspected' box on the form.

Additional inspections may also take place following significant weather events, public complaints/concerns or accidents/incidents. It is incumbent upon the Supervisors and the Parks Foreman to ensure that these inspections occur as necessary.

4.4 Inspection Checklists

It is important that inspections be cost effective, consistent and yield useful information to RDEK staff. Because of the varying purposes and amenities at each park, trail and recreation facility, 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, trail and recreation facility inspections. A list of inspection checklists is provided below and all inspection checklists are attached to this document.

- Regional and Electoral Area Parks and Lake Accesses
- Trails
- Boat Launches
- Exhibition Grounds
- Ballparks

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 Environmental Services Manager or Supervisors when it is deemed necessary and as more parks, trails and recreation facilities are added to the responsibility of the RDEK.

4.5 Procedure:

Park, trail and recreation facility inspections should be completed systematically (the same way each time) 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 hazards 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 (Section 3.4) in the future.

4.6 Inspection Documentation

Inspection checklists are to be completed in the field as hard-copies by the inspector. The inspection forms are to be filled in using permanent ink. If more space is required, the inspector can attach additional sheets. It is important that each time a park, trail or recreation facility inspection is conducted; the inspection checklist is fully completed by the inspector at the time of inspection. Inspections during the closed or off season are the exception, as there is no authorized public use and many of the amenities and systems are not accessible or turned on.

The inspection forms are designed to act as a 'memory trigger' for a number of considerations and to provide the inspector with the mechanism to add comments and note deficiencies. They also provide the opportunity to note whether there were any actions taken or needed and to put a timetable on these activities, if required. The inspector is asked to indicate a 'Yes', 'No', 'Not Inspected' or 'Not Applicable' beside each item listed on the inspection checklists. The inspection checklists are designed thematically in an effort to increase efficiency and consistency. For example, 'Signage', 'Site – General' and 'Miscellaneous' are all common sections on the inspection checklists.

Once completed in the field, the inspector will provide the inspection checklists to the Environmental Services Secretary, for filing at the RDEK's Cranbrook office. Inspectors may use previously completed checklists when revisiting the sites.