



Agenda No: 5.1

Mtg Date: Mar 11, 2010

## Governance & Services Committee Report

**TO:** Governance & Services Committee

**FROM:** Eve Wegscheidler, Recreation/Education Program Coordinator  
Murray Kopp, Director - Parks Services

**DATE:** March 3, 2010

**SUBJECT:** Woodhaven Regional Park / UBCO Eco Art Project

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### RECOMMENDATION

No recommendation, for information only.

### BACKGROUND

Nancy Holmes, Head of Department of Creative Studies, University of British Columbia Okanagan, approached Regional Parks Services with a proposal to create a series of eco art projects in Woodhaven Nature Conservancy Regional Park. She wishes to invite Okanagan artists and students in Creative Studies at UBC Okanagan to learn about the park and create art projects in and around the park. The projects are to be presented on a seasonal basis for one year. They will have a minimal impact on the natural environment, taking nothing from and leaving nothing in the park. She applied for and received funding from UBC for this project.

### ANALYSIS

In the summer of 2009, Woodhaven was re-opened to the public after undergoing extensive remedial work as per the 2006 Urban Forest Health Strategy. The park had been closed for public safety while hazard tree removal and fuel management was conducted. Now the park is closed during the winter and from time to time for strong wind events, when snow loads or wind gusts may lead to unsafe conditions. Parks staff will be in continual contact with the project leaders to ensure the safety of participants while in the park.

The park is a nature conservancy and the endangered Western Screech Owl lives there. There are concerns that any type of event that brings in larger numbers of people would impact mating and nesting habits of these raptors and other park fauna. Parks staff can close specific areas of the park as required to minimize human disturbance. It has been indicated that the event is anticipated to be low-scale, with small numbers of people.

## CONCLUSION

This is a unique and innovative opportunity to involve UBCO and the art community in Regional Parks, and specifically highlight Woodhaven Conservancy Regional Park to the residents of the Central Okanagan.

Respectfully submitted,

Eve Wegscheidler  
Education/Recreation Program Coordinator

Approved for inclusion



Murray Kopp  
Director – Parks Services

### Attachments:

1. Letter from Nancy Holmes - Head, Department of Creative Studies  
University of British Columbia Okanagan

**From:** Holmes, Nancy [mailto:nancy.holmes@ubc.ca]  
**Sent:** January 19, 2010 3:29 PM  
**To:** I-Parks  
**Subject:** To Eve- Woodhaven Project

Dear Eve:

Thanks for your interest in the eco-art project that I am helping to organize, with the support and collaboration of Lor Mairs, in Woodhaven Nature Conservancy.

I am a UBC Okanagan professor and poet and I live near Woodhaven. I was delighted when it opened again this past summer. In celebration, I applied for a grant from UBC to create a series of eco art projects in the park, and was lucky to receive some funding. I would like to receive your support and blessing for the projects as they unfold.

So, here is some information about our plans.

#### The Project:

The project is to create a series of eco art projects in Woodhaven. With the permission of the Regional District and the collaboration of Lor Mairs who is the resident caretaker of the park, I will invite a series of Okanagan artists and students in Creative Studies at UBC Okanagan to learn about the park and then create a series of ephemeral eco art projects about and in the park.

The series of eco art projects will take place over the course of one year and all four seasons (starting in Spring 2010). The artists (performers, musicians, writers, sculptors and other visual artists) and students will create multiple works of art in the park and in response to the park. The works of art will have minimal impact on the natural environment, leaving nothing in the park and similarly removing nothing from the park. Lor and I plan to film the art projects and the people involved and create a 20 – 30 minute film about Woodhaven and the eco art attention it will receive.

#### Eco Art—What Is It?

Eco art is art-based projects that address environmental concerns. Eco art is informed by fields of knowledge outside art—such as natural science—and through local understanding as it attempts to awaken appreciation for the ecological significance of particular places, species, and non-human elements in general. Eco art generally follows four modes: collaboration, community, conversation, and education. The projects focus on learning about habitats, ecosystems, and how to dwell sensitively in the world. The key principle of eco art is to do no harm to the environment and to respect the place in which it unfolds. There are eco art projects throughout the world, from huge remediating art and engineering projects, to small song-bird recording projects in neighbourhoods. Most recently, a group of artists was commissioned to create art in Stanley Park in Vancouver.

#### Goals:

For the Woodhaven Project, the invited artists will create works of art that the public will be invited to enjoy/ view/ participate in. The art will not remove or damage anything in the park, or leave anything behind that shouldn't be there.

We will make a film that will document the eco art and the park, and be a work of art itself. This film will be shown throughout the Okanagan community at nature festivals such as the Meadowlark Festival, and in various other locations in the valley and further afield,

Broader goals are to celebrate this unique place and to promote environmental awareness (our own as artists and citizens and also the public's) about fragile ecosystems, endangered species, the challenges of stewardship and the history of environmental activism, to develop collaborative networks and processes the artists can use in future projects, and to make art that is interesting, beautiful, challenging and innovative!

#### Other Values and Principles:

Woodhaven has a historical and environmental activist heritage. Woodhaven's story is also a marker of the rise of the environmental movement in this area. Joan and Jim Burbridge, who were the park's resident caretakers for many years, were key voices in the activist movement that created the park in the 1970s and we would like to celebrate them.

This project should also foster a sense of the value of the nature sanctuary and our moral obligation to conserve and educate. We would like to invite children and educators to enjoy the works in the park and to learn more about the places around us.

This project also should develop, nurture and extend communication between artists, the neighbourhood, Okanagan indigenous people, and the wider public (Kelowna, Okanagan). By inviting the public into the park to experience it and the artwork, and the later dissemination of the film, this project will affect the way the community perceives this place and our relationship to the natural world in this region.

#### The Projects:

I have gathered about 20 artists who have been grouped into four teams, one for each season. The teams are gathering together and talking about the projects they would like to unfold in the park over the course of the next year.

The spring team is in the early stages of planning its projects. I have a group of second year Creative Writing students who have each been assigned a species that lives in the park, or that appears in the park, and they will be studying about the Burbridges, and looking at the information on the Regional District website about Woodhaven. With all this information, they will be writing poetry and creating artistic little pamphlets that can be handed out to park attendees, as a sort of "alternate" nature guide to accompany the pamphlet at Woodhaven. We are hoping to get some publicity and invite people to come to the park on Saturday, April 17<sup>th</sup> in the afternoon. This will be the "launch" of the project. Other spring team members are planning some interesting uses of music or sound to be played in the park and possibly some visual art that will be displayed in the park for a short period of time.

Other teams are planning interesting alternative performances, readings, walks and music. One team is planning to work with school children and music in the park. All the art projects will involve non-invasive or non-damaging processes and results. We have bought a film camera and Lori is filming

interesting sights around her cabin, and we will be keeping the camera in the park for the year to collect more footage.

Conclusion:

We hope that you will be interested in supporting this small but exciting project to bring some really lovely and innovative eco art to Kelowna. Please be assured that I am very fond of Woodhaven, I am a neighbor to it, and that I want to ensure the safety of everyone, all creatures, plants and the park itself. This project will, I believe, honour and respect this special place and raise its profile and its value in the community as well as provincially and nationally as many of the artists involved have wide-reaching reputations.

Please let me know if you have any concerns or suggestions. As I mentioned to you, I'd really love to take my students on an interpretive walk of the park before they finish their writing projects, so if the park clean up is done in March, I'd be happy to arrange a field trip for them!

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