



News Release

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Regional Parks Growth to Enhance Artistic Endeavors

The Regional District of Central Okanagan's unveiled two key property acquisitions under its multi-million dollar Parks Legacy Program.

The District recently closed the purchase of the 3.5-hectare 969 Raymer Rd. property and the 17.7-hectare 979 Raymer Rd. property, both adjacent to the existing Woodhaven Nature Conservancy Regional Park. A total of \$6.9-million was used from the Regional Parks Legacy Fund to acquire the two properties in the south Mission area of Kelowna.

Regional Board Chair Robert Hobson says, "Purchasing these important properties helps fulfill our goal of protecting important regional ecosystems for future generations. These additions provide for future expansion of the existing Woodhaven Regional Park as well as a critical nature corridor connection to the higher elevations of Bellevue Creek. They also offer a key node in the City of Kelowna plan for the Bellevue Creek Linear Park."

The property purchases will also give the Regional District more control of its existing infrastructure by improving access to the Bellevue Creek diversion channel which supplies water to Woodhaven Nature Conservancy Regional Park.

In 2007, the Regional Board agreed to earmark a special tax requisition over five years to build the Parks Legacy Fund in order to leverage the purchase and protection of important properties for the Regional Park system. Hobson says, "The creation of and contributions to this fund required the vision, cooperation and support of all Regional Board members, especially as the economy was facing challenging times. It's taken a few years, but now we're in a position to start seeing the payoff on that unanimous endeavor on behalf of everyone living in the Central Okanagan."

In addition to outlining the property purchases, Hobson announced that the Regional District was working the University of British Columbia Okanagan campus (UBCO) to develop a unique artistic and cultural partnership. The Regional District hopes, with these property acquisitions, to further cultivate the successful relationship with UBCO's Faculty of Creative and Critical Studies. The intention would be to expand on the successful Eco-Art initiative undertaken during 2010 in Woodhaven Nature Conservancy Regional Park.

The announcement was celebrated with an art project created by UBC's visiting artist-in-residence, Marlene Creates. Newfoundland ecological artist and poet Creates worked with over 30 Okanagan artists and community members on a unique "award ribbon" project that people at the announcement were invited to explore and enjoy.

Now that the property purchases are complete, the Regional Parks staff will begin to implement the Park Management Plan, with 969 Raymer Rd. set to open in the near future, and 979 Raymer Rd. to open after lease obligations to the previous owners expire.

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