

November 30, 1995

SUBJECT: Wildlife in the City Workshop Report

RECOMMENDATION:

1. THAT the Board receive the accompanying Wildlife In The City workshop report.
2. THAT the Board approve in principle the retention of the existing service level for wildlife management in the City of Vancouver park system subject to the availability of funding.

BACKGROUND

An information report was submitted to the Board April 24, 1995, which recommended the development of plans for management of wildlife and wildlife habitat within the Vancouver park system. Park Board staff work with wildlife as part of their daily routines. Requests for information, recovery of injured wildlife, enhancement of habitats, wildlife protection and public education are all activities commonly handled by employees.

On October 2, 1995, a workshop was held to discuss local wildlife management issues, to consider the roles and responsibilities of the Park Board and the opportunities for working in partnership with other groups. Over 80 organizations and individuals were invited representing Park Board and City of Vancouver, federal and provincial agencies, other municipalities and nonprofit agencies with local wildlife interests.

Forty representatives of thirty-one organizations met to discuss wildlife issues including wildlife inventory, interpretation, enhancement and protection of wildlife, emergency response, wildlife studies, and wildlife control. Participants in the workshop came from diverse backgrounds and presented a wide range of expertise. The workshop program was well received by the group and there was enthusiastic discussion about the selected topics. Many attenders brought areas of special interest to the meeting for consideration by the group in an initial brainstorming session. Later, they worked in four smaller groups to discuss the key wildlife issues which are summarized in the appendices. Each group identified specific actions to address the wildlife issues discussed.

A draft workshop report prepared after the day-long session was circulated to workshop attenders and others unable to attend. The representatives reviewed the draft and many submitted comments for consideration in the final report. Dr. Sarah Groves acted as the facilitator of the workshop and prepared the workshop reports which have been distributed to all participants.

The Wildlife in the City Workshop results listed the important ideas and actions related to each major topic of discussion. The role of the Park Board and other major players were discussed as part of the process.

Three key actions have been identified in the report:

1. Formally establish an Urban Wildlife Committee in Vancouver.
2. Provide staff resources for wildlife and urban ecology initiatives within the Vancouver Park Board.
3. Involve the coordinator of environmental programs in wildlife issues.

In view of the recommendations, items 2 and 3, which dealt with the issue of staffing levels, are especially significant for this report.

STAFF RESOURCES Vancouver Park Board staff spend a significant amount of time involved with the issues of local wildlife and habitats, which was the subject of a concluding session of the workshop. A staff review of present activities, listed in Appendix A, includes many of the recommended activities listed by the workshop participants. The estimated time spent on wildlife management issues is 3150 hours, approximately 1.8 staff years. This work was done mainly by employees of the zoo department.

The Budget Management Plan has required the reduction of staff as the closure of the zoo has gradually occurred. As of 1996, staff resources will be reduced to the point where the current level of service for wildlife services will no longer be possible. A series of options, presented in Appendix A, lists the services and wildlife values that will be lost with reductions in present service levels in Option 2 and 3. A fourth option examines the activities to be provided if additional resources are available.

The majority of attenders at the workshop described the need for increased staff resources to be designated for wildlife management work. After the Budget Management plan has been fully implemented the Board's ability to provide service levels will be significantly diminished. A minimum of 1.8 staff years will be necessary in order to maintain the current service. Further, additional staff time will be required if recommendations of the workshop are to be met.

The issue of responsibility for wildlife may be clear in the legal sense. However, there are many situations which regularly occur where care for wildlife and habitats has been assumed by Park Board staff in the absence of resources from the agencies that may have jurisdiction. We should continue to take responsibility for the environment which we share most directly with many other species. The opportunity for the Park Board to continue and expand their leadership role in wildlife stewardship issues was the subject of considerable discussion.

The three key actions were considered priorities by the participants of the Wildlife in the City workshop. In consideration of these actions it is therefore recommended that the Board should consider maintaining the basic services for wildlife management at the present (1995) levels as a minimum.

CONCLUSIONS

The Wildlife in the City workshop provided an opportunity for a wide range of organization representatives to get together to discuss wildlife issues in Vancouver. The role of the Vancouver Park Board was considered as part of the workshop. Representatives recommended that Park staff resources be enhanced for wildlife and urban ecology initiatives. Three key actions for implementation resulted from the workshop. Based on these priorities it is recommended that in principle the Board support the wildlife management activities to continue at the present level which has been determined to be 1.8 staff years subject to the availability of funding.

If resources for wildlife management are provided, then a Wildlife and Urban Ecology section within the Environment and Operations division should be created.

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