

Date: May 15, 2008



TO: Board Members – Vancouver Park Board
FROM: General Manager – Parks and Recreation
SUBJECT: Forest Management Plan – Consultative Agreement with the University of British Columbia

RECOMMENDATION

THAT the Board approve the expenditure of \$62,000 to retain the consultative and data collection services of the University of British Columbia's Faculty of Forestry, to assist with the preparation of a Forest Management Plan for Stanley Park.

BACKGROUND

The 250 hectare forested area of Stanley Park is Vancouver's most ecologically intact and widely appreciated parcel of remnant forest, and constitutes the majority of the land area of this premiere park. Historically, it was managed by staff without overall guiding principles or an operational plan. In 1989, Macmillan Bloedel completed a thorough study and mapping exercise of the forests attributes, from which it drew detailed management recommendations encapsulated in Stanley Park's first Forest Management Plan. Although rejected by the Board as being overly interventionist, the plan contained much useful information that subsequently guided work activities outlined in the Board approved 'Stanley Park Regeneration Plan – 1990'. Since then, operationally funded work consisted of hazard tree mitigation, storm cleanup, and trail brushing. Capitally funded work during this period predominately was the rehabilitation of storm damaged areas, as they occurred; and other silvacultural activities such as stand thinning and fire risk reduction strategies.

After the wind storms of 2006 / 2007 devastated large areas of the forest and seawall; staff's first response was to prepare the 'Stanley Park Restoration Plan', which was adopted by the Board in April 2007. Restoration work commenced shortly afterward, with results summarized within the Stanley Park Restoration Progress Report – December 2007. One of the Guiding Principles (5d) of the 'legacy' portion of the Restoration Plan was that the Stanley Park Forest Management Plan would be updated. This activity was budgeted in the Stanley Park Restoration Plan.

A group of members of the University of British Columbia's Faculty of Forestry have provided excellent guidance at all points of time and levels of our restoration planning and work. They have recently offered their services toward the development of this plan, and presented a proposal that details their participation. This proposal is synopsised in the discussion section of this document. Staff considers the advice of their professorial staff to be of the highest scientific quality, and the expected quantity of proposed work to be of excellent dollar value. Their multidisciplinary team promises to provide the breadth and balance of knowledge and wisdom required for such a task.

DISCUSSION

A long term vision for the forest was established during the preparation of the Stanley Park Restoration Plan. After extensive public consultation, the Board approved vision statement was published:

'That Stanley Park's forest be a resilient coastal forest with a diversity of native tree and other species and habitats, that allows park visitors to experience nature in the city'.

The Stanley Park Forest Management Plan will define the goals, objectives, and actions that are required to move the forest closer toward this vision.

It must then establish the current conditions by conducting a thorough evaluation of forest attributes. This involves the setting of over two hundred sample plots where natural features are measured and later statistically quantified, to inform the production of a series of maps and tables. Such information is essential toward developing the correct action plans. The maps generated by 1989 the Forest Management Plan, while still informative, are now out of date because of an increased understanding of coastal forest ecology, and sometimes radically changed forest conditions. In addition to updating tree pertinent information; attributes pertaining to all forest layers will be explored. Wildlife habitat features will be quantified. Forest threats such as insects, diseases, and fire fuel characteristics will also be included in this multi-dimensional mapping exercise. It is anticipated that the maps will be a legacy whose usefulness will extend beyond the preparation of the management plan.

The plan will identify and describe a list of actions that will allow the timely achievement of its goals and objectives. Treatment prescriptions will be prioritized and scheduled, then reevaluated as to how well they would serve the goals and objectives. Examples of silvicultural prescriptions that are frequently employed in forest management are: stand thinning, fire fuel ladder reduction pruning, wind firming, and the manual brushing around young trees. It will also provide an extensive appendix of *best management practices* that cover a wide variety of forest related subjects. They will serve to guard against future disturbances, and enable quick and intelligent responses should they nonetheless occur.

Park Board staff will author the updated Forest Management Plan, which is expected to be ready for public presentation in late 2008. The UBC group would provide the following services:

Integrated consultation services during the preparation period, via a designated liaison. Access will be provided to recognized experts in virtually every aspect of forest ecology and protection.

The field survey, data analysis, and mapping of current forest conditions. Senior and post-graduate students will perform the work under the direction of the Professor of Silviculture.

Predictive computer modeling of probable future forest responses to varying treatments. These sophisticated tools have gained widespread professional acceptance over recent years. They will enable optimal prescriptive actions.

Direct assistance with the preparation of prescriptions. Recommendations on sequencing, work allocations, and budgeting will be provided.

Other support products such as secondary reports, presentations, and extension materials.

Beyond the scope of work for this consultative agreement the UBC group has expressed sincere interest in establishing a long term working relationship with Stanley Park that would be mutually beneficial. The Stanley Park forest provides an excellent laboratory for ecological studies close to their campus, and a potential showcase for the fruits of their research. Some of the sampling plots established this summer are intended to become permanent study locations from which changing forest conditions can be tracked over many years. In return, the Park Board would receive ongoing information support which would improve our ability to adapt its forest management strategies to changing conditions.

CONCLUSION

Within the approved Stanley Park Restoration Plan, a series of guiding principles were established. The last and perhaps the most enduring is that an updated Stanley Park Forest Management Plan be created. This plan will inform and guide silvacultural activities over an expected scale of twenty years, with opportunities for periodic review and revision. It will be a public statement of the Park Board's commitment to its vision for the forest, and will ensure that we continue to move towards it.

The engagement of the University of British Columbia's Faculty of Forestry in a consultative relationship will provide the Park Board with the best possible resources to complete this task. Their assistance to date, free of remuneration, has proven to be an invaluable asset throughout the park's restoration work. Staff endorses their retention in the belief that they offer both extraordinary quality and dollar value.

Prepared by:

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