



November 13, 2020

**TO:** Park Board Chair and Commissioners  
**FROM:** General Manager – Vancouver Board of Parks and Recreation  
**SUBJECT:** Daylighting Canyon Creek at Spanish Banks - Report Back

## RECOMMENDATION

THAT the Vancouver Park Board direct staff to proceed with planning and scoping work for the daylighting of Canyon Creek at Spanish Banks Beach Park, for consideration of project implementation funding in the 2023-2026 Capital Plan, with the scoping work to include:

- a. conducting public and Musqueam, Squamish and Tsleil-Waututh engagement;
- b. preparing preliminary concept plans; and
- c. preparing preliminary implementation costing.

## REPORT SUMMARY

The purpose of this report is to report back with findings and recommendations for the potential daylighting of Canyon Creek, as directed by the Board motion approved on March 9, 2020. This report outlines the feasibility of the proposed project and describes the scope of work and park implications considered to date. Based on these findings, staff have determined that daylighting Canyon Creek through Spanish Banks Beach Park is feasible and it would align with Park Board and City policy goals to increase access to nature, create new habitat areas, and integrate rainwater into parks. Subject to existing 2019-2022 project planning reprioritization, this project could be planned and scoped in time for an implementation budget to be submitted for consideration in the 2023-2026 Capital Plan.

## BOARD AUTHORITY / POLICY / PREVIOUS DECISIONS

Pursuant to section 497A of the [Vancouver Charter](#), Park Board has jurisdiction over its parks, even if located just outside the City boundary. Spanish Banks Beach Park is located west of the City boundary on land leased by the Province to the City. The 99-year lease ends in 2029.

On March 9, 2020, the Board approved the motion titled [Daylighting 'Canyon Creek' at Spanish Banks](#), which directed staff to investigate the potential restoration of Canyon Creek in Spanish Banks Beach Park.

[VanPlay](#), the Board's Parks and Recreation Services Master Plan (2019/20) set priorities and provides tools and policies to support the pursuit of equity, connectivity and access to parks and recreation for all. This project aligns with the VanPlay Framework's direction to 'Weave the City Together', by connecting and enriching ecosystems throughout the city.

The proposed daylighting of Canyon Creek is supported by the following policy and strategies: [Bird Strategy](#) (2015), [Biodiversity Strategy](#) (2016), [Climate Emergency Response](#) (2019), [Rain City Strategy](#) (2019).

## BACKGROUND

Daylighting is the term for restoration of an originally open-air watercourse, which was at some point diverted below ground, back into an above-ground channel.

Canyon Creek, located west of Spanish Banks Creek, is not part of an Equity Initiative Zone as defined by VanPlay, however it is part of a watershed that is, relatively uniquely in an urban context, mostly contained within the Pacific Spirit Regional Park. It has been stewarded south of Marine Drive by Metro Vancouver Regional Park staff and volunteers. As shown in Figures 1 and 2 below, it is currently channeled underground as it meets NW Marine Drive and runs through a pipe under Spanish Banks West Parking Lot A and an area of lawn before being discharged into English Bay (see Figure 1).



Figure 1: Spanish Banks Off Leash Area, vehicle parking, and proposed location of Canyon Creek daylighting

Three creeks in this Pacific Spirit Park watershed flow north out into English Bay. Canyon Creek (as illustrated in Figure 1) is the only one not yet daylighted north of NW Marine Drive. Spanish Banks Creek (450 m to the east), was restored with Park Board approval in 1999, and salmon have been successfully reintroduced. Salish Creek (1100 m to the west) was upgraded by baffling the culvert under NW Marine in 2012. In 2017, Metro Vancouver increased pool and riffle habitat, and its ravine was enhanced, including limiting human and dog access to riparian habitat.

## DISCUSSION: PROJECT SCOPE AND IMPLICATIONS

In response to the Board's motion in March, staff started by researching the various implications of this potential project. As part of this, staff initiated discussions with representatives from Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO), Metro Vancouver Regional Parks, and Stream Management at the Ministry of Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Operations (the Ministry), all of whom had been involved with Spanish Banks Creek, to help ascertain the feasibility of daylighting Canyon Creek. They shared their experiences and indicated conceptual support for the daylighting of Canyon Creek. The Ministry advised it would require an application under the Water Sustainability Act, since the project would involve "the restoration or maintenance of a stream channel by a municipality or regional district", a process which could take a year in consideration by the Province.

### Land Tenure

As shown in Figure 1, the proposed daylighting works would be undertaken only within the City's lease area. No works would be conducted in the road right-of-way or within Pacific Spirit Park. The City's 99-year lease from the Province ends in January 2029. Park Board would initiate discussions with the Province on terms for renewal or extension of the lease prior to embarking on implementation of a daylighting scheme.

### Vehicle Parking

The 85m culvert containing Canyon Creek extends north from NW Marine Drive below Spanish Banks West Parking Lot A. Daylighting this section of the creek would affect approximately 20 parking stalls, assuming a riparian area of approximately 25m in width (see Figures 1 and 2).



Figure 2: Canyon Creek enters culvert on south side of NW Marine Drive (left); its outflow into English Bay (right)

### Off Leash Dog Area

Canyon Creek currently flows under the Spanish Banks Park off-leash dog area ("OLA" – see Figure 1) which is the third largest in Vancouver at 50,374m<sup>2</sup>. If daylighted, the creek would bisect the current OLA and, approximately 1,850m<sup>2</sup> of the OLA would be removed and naturalized into riparian habitat (4% of the OLA's area). This would also change the current turf mowing regime, and the riparian area would need to be fenced from OLA disturbance to wildlife.

### **Spanish Banks Bike Path**

The gravel pedestrian and bike paths through the OLA run parallel to each other close to the beach. The existing bike path running between the open grass area of the OLA and the popular beach area is currently a conflict zone for cyclists, pedestrians and off leash. This OLA needs to be brought into compliance with the Board approved People Parks and Dogs Strategy and as such realignment of the bike path and/or fencing may be considered. This would be subject to further study and public engagement.

### **First Nations**

Should the Board support proceeding with this project, Park Board staff would initiate First Nation engagement through issuing project referrals to the Musqueam, Squamish and Tsleil-Waututh (MST) governments. Additionally, if this project were to proceed, the Ministry would formally consult with First Nations as part of the application process under the Water Sustainability Act.

The Musqueam Indian Band was supportive of the Spanish Banks and Salish Creek projects and archaeological oversight was conducted for both. More recently, in 2016, staff issued project referrals for the creek daylighting project in Tatlow and Volunteer Parks to each of the representative governments of MST. Tsleil-Waututh and Squamish confirmed their support to proceed with the project; Musqueam requested deeper involvement. The project schedule was modified to accommodate an internal consultation process with them and key learnings from that process were incorporated.

### **Project Resourcing and Costs**

The preparation of preliminary concept plans, public and MST engagement and the preliminary implementation costing can be covered within existing 2019-2022 project budgets. However, staff are at capacity working on current capital plan delivery, so proceeding on this project would require reprioritization of workload in 2021-2022, which would impact current project timelines.

## **CONCLUSION & NEXT STEPS**

Subject to the Board's approval of the recommendations outlined in this report and reprioritization of staff projects, engagement with the public and the Musqueam, Squamish and Tsleil-Waututh governments could be undertaken in 2021-2022. Contingent on the results of that engagement and the required environmental permitting, costing and an implementation budget could be completed for submission into the 2023-2026 capital plan.

Daylighting Canyon Creek through Spanish Banks Beach Park is potentially feasible; the headwaters are protected within a conservation-focused regional park, and this is one of the very few creeks in a Vancouver park that could easily be daylighted with thoughtful planning and engagement. Given its location, it would enjoy high visibility and educational/ecological awareness value. The project aligns with Park Board and City policy goals to increase access to nature, create new habitat areas, and manage and treat storm water through natural features. It embodies the VanPlay direction to 'Weave the City Together', by connecting and enriching the City's ecosystems.

General Manager's Office  
Vancouver Board of Parks and Recreation  
Vancouver, BC

Prepared by: Alan Duncan, Planning Policy and Environment

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