



September 28, 2021

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

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## RECOMMENDATION

THAT the Vancouver Park Board direct staff to proceed with further planning for the daylighting of Canyon Creek at Spanish Banks Beach Park by:

- A. Initiating a referral with Musqueam, Squamish and Tsleil-Waututh (MST) Governments;
- B. Submitting tenure applications for a Crown Land Lease and a Water Sustainability Act Approval; and
- C. Preparing preliminary implementation costing for 2023-2026 Capital Plan.

## REPORT SUMMARY

The purpose of this report is to update the Board with findings and recommendations for the potential daylighting of Canyon Creek at Spanish Banks Beach park, as directed by the Board motion approved on [March 9, 2020](#) and feasibility report on [November 13, 2020](#). This project has a number of potential benefits, but would require further work in advance of public consultation. Engagement with the Musqueam, Squamish and Tsleil-Waututh Nations will be necessary per previous Park Board direction (see below). In addition, the fact that the site is located out of City boundary limits requires further consultation with other government agencies. Based on discussions with the Province, an approval for a Crown Land tenure lease and a Water Sustainability Act approval would be required. The project as conceptualized will have a direct impact on existing conditions by modifying the Spanish Banks West Park extension Off-Leash-Area (OLA), by reducing the parking allotment, and by realigning the bicycle pathway. Staff supports daylighting of Canyon Creek as it would align with Park Board and City policy goals to increase access to nature, create new habitat areas, and support the [Climate Emergency Action Plan](#), a building block of the [Vancouver Plan](#). Subject to existing 2021/2022 project planning reprioritization, this project could be planned and scoped in time 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 West Extension is adjacent to Spanish Banks Beach Park, located west of the City boundary.

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

On November 13, 2020, the Board approved the report [Daylighting Canyon Creek at Spanish Banks – Report Back](#). General scoping, local considerations, and public and Indigenous engagement were highlighted as next steps.

[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 [VanPlay Goal 7: Restore Vancouver's Wild Spaces and Vital Biodiversity](#) 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), and likely direction for [Vancouver Plan](#) (2022).

## **BACKGROUND**

Surrounded by a unique urban context, there are three streams contained within the Pacific Spirit Regional Park watershed flowing north out into English Bay and stewarded by Metro Vancouver Regional Park staff and volunteers (Figure 1):

- Canyon Creek, 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;
- Spanish Banks Creek (450 m east of Canyon Creek), restored with Board approval in 1999, and works spearheaded by Spanish Banks Streamkeepers to restore riparian areas, improve fish passage and create overwintering habitat where salmon have been successfully reintroduced; and
- Salish Creek (1100 m west of Canyon Creek), 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.

Daylighting of Canyon Creek would create an aboveground watercourse to flow into mostly infilled land where Spanish Banks beach currently sits. If successful, this project could create a model that could inform habitat restoration in other busy beach parks such as in the West End.



**Figure 1:** Daylighting Canyon Creek at Spanish Banks project area and location of three historical streams: a) Salish Creek; b) Canyon Creek; c) Spanish Banks Creek.

## DISCUSSION: PROJECT SCOPE

### Preliminary Concept Plan

Staff have produced a preliminary concept plan for the daylighting of Canyon Creek and associated improvements (Figure 2).

The design goals leading this project are to:

- Connect the existing Canyon Creek through Pacific Spirit Regional Park watershed to Spanish Banks West Extension Park beach outlet on English Bay;
- Favour naturalization and enhancing riparian forest and vegetated backshore to contribute to the biological diversity of the area;
- Increase biodiversity through the planting of native plants and creation of new habitat for bird, aquatic and pollinator species;
- Protect newly created riparian habitat from human and off leash dog disturbance;
- Improve the quality of water entering English Bay;
- Improve shoreline access through the beach by realigning the bikeway to run separately from the pedestrian pathway;
- Promote enhancement projects in high profile locations for high educational value return; and
- Increase awareness and support for projects that contribute to the overall ecological health.



**Figure 2:**  
Preliminary  
concept plan to  
Daylight  
Canyon Creek

## Required Engagement & Review

### 1. Musqueam, Squamish and Tsleil-Waututh (MST)

Subject to the Board's approval of this report, staff will issue project referrals to the Musqueam, Squamish and Tsleil-Waututh governments in 2021-2022, as outlined in the November, 2020 Board report. The Musqueam Indian Band has been supportive of the Spanish Banks Creek and Salish Creek projects and archaeological oversight was conducted for both. A parallel provincial Indigenous referral process would happen with the Crown Tenure applications; staff would flag these processes to both agencies and find efficiencies during the review.

### 2. Crown Tenure Application and Public Consultation

The proposed project area currently sits on untenured Crown Land. A tenure application for park purposes under the Community Institutional policy will be required to secure the land and to obtain a Nominal Rent Tenure (NRT). NRT's have a \$1.00 prepaid fee for the entire term of the tenure. The recommended form of allocation will be a 30-year Lease, appropriate for projects that are expected to require the ongoing, long-term use of Crown land. Preliminary discussions with the Province have not revealed any overlapping encumbrances on the land that may prohibit issuing the tenure. The proposed project will involve changes in and about a stream, hence triggering a Provincial Water Sustainability Act approval.

Staff would expect to conduct public engagement in 2022.

A change approval is a required authorization providing the terms and conditions, the time of year to do the works, and/or other measures to protect the aquatic ecosystem, the hydraulic integrity

of the stream channel and the rights of other water users. Staff recommends starting this application right away as it can take over a year to be approved.

### Project Resourcing

Staff resources would need to be reprioritized to investigate technical approaches, develop detailed concept options, conduct engagement, and estimate approximate costs for daylighting of the creek. The resulting concept options and illustrations could be used for future engagement and communication purposes. Staff are proposing shifting resources per above in 2021-2022, in part to develop a submission into the 2023-2026 capital plan.

### CONSIDERATIONS

Subject to the Board's approval of this report staff would examine three main considerations; comprehensive public engagement would eventually be conducted with regard to these.

#### 1. Off Leash Dog Area

Canyon Creek currently flows under the Spanish Banks West Park Extension Off Leash Dog Area (OLA), the third largest in Vancouver at 50,374m<sup>2</sup>. If daylighted, the creek would bisect the current OLA removing approximately 1,850m<sup>2</sup> (~4% area) to be turned into naturalized riparian habitat. The riparian area would need to be fenced from OLA disturbance to wildlife. Resolution of this would integrate considerations from the Park Board's [People Parks and Dogs Strategy](#).

#### 2. Bike Path

The gravel pedestrian and bike paths through the OLA run parallel to each other close to the beach. The existing paths running between the open grass area of the OLA and the beach area are currently a conflict zone for cyclists, pedestrians and off leash. The daylighting project process will be an opportunity to combine engagement and implementation efforts in bringing this OLA into compliance (e.g. separation between OLA and path) with the People Parks and Dogs Strategy policy.

#### 3. 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 35 out of a total of 266 existing parking stalls over lots A and B (or 13%) that are shown in Figure 3.



**Figure 3:** Existing local considerations for potential daylit location: Off-leash dog area, shared bike and pedestrian pathways, and vehicle parking.

## **FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS**

Work to date on this project has been completed within existing 2019-2022 project budgets. However, staff are at capacity working on current capital plan delivery, so proceeding on this project will require reprioritization of workload in 2021-2022, which may impact current project timelines. An estimate for design and construction costs beyond the planning tasks described herein will be completed for submission into the 2023-2026 Capital Plan, pending Board decision on this report. Operating costs will also be considered at that time.

## **CONCLUSION**

This report recommends the daylighting of Canyon Creek through Spanish Banks West Extension Park. The general concept and goal would daylight the creek to be similar to a stream in as natural state as possible. The opportunities to daylight streams in Parks are relatively few in the City; this project will bring connectivity within a larger Regional watershed of important conservation value, of high visibility, and promote ecological awareness. Daylighting of Canyon Creek aligns with Park Board and City policy goals to improve access to nature, create new naturalized habitat areas, and increase climate resilience.

Subject to the Board's approval of the recommendations here outlined and engagement with MST, a submission of Crown Land tenure applications and the development of project options could proceed during 2021-2022, with implementation costing to be included as part of the Park Board's 2023-2026 capital plan submission.

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

Prepared by:  
Francisca Olaya, Environmental Planner – Planning, Policy and Environment

fo/jk

Vancouver, BC