



February 26, 2024

MEMO TO : Park Board Commissioners

FROM : Tiina Mack – Director, Planning & Park Development

SUBJECT : **On Water Watercraft Launch at Beaches By-law Update - Board Briefing Memo**

Dear Commissioners,

The purpose of this memo is to provide an update on the implementation of [On Water \(2019\)](#), Vancouver's Non-motorized Watercraft Recreation Strategy, and in particular the recent and temporary designation of four beach locations for the launch and recovery of non-motorized watercraft, successfully piloted every summer since 2021. By-law changes to make non-motorized watercraft permanently allowed to launch in designated beach areas are required and will be brought to the Board for decision on March 11, 2024.

Background

In June of 2019, the Board approved the On Water Strategy to support non-motorized watercraft recreation in line with the Park Board's mission to provide, preserve and advocate for parks and recreation to benefit all people, communities, and the environment. Non-motorized watercraft is defined as small watercraft powered by people and other natural elements for on-water recreation activities. This includes canoeing, kite surfing, kayaking, kite surfing, outrigger, paddle boarding, rowing, wind surfing and small craft sailing.

The strategy provides recommendations for non-motorized watercraft services and guidance for planning related to existing facilities and future non-powered watercraft facilities for the waters of False Creek, Spanish Banks, English Bay, and Burrard Inlet near Coal Harbour. In the current Parks Control by-law, non-motorized watercraft are not allowed to use beaches to launch, as they are designated as swimming beaches. However, beaches are the only means available to launch non-motorized watercraft.

Non-motorized Watercraft Launch and Recovery Beach Access Pilot Project

In response to the On Water Strategy Action 4.2: "*Consider providing designated launch areas at beaches and parks managed by the Park Board*", staff initiated a pilot in the summer of 2021, to allow non-motorized watercraft to both launch from and return to designated areas within beaches as outlined in a [Board Briefing Memo](#) (May 21, 2021). Four temporary designated launch areas were established and available every day from June 1 to September 30 between the hours of 11:30am to 8:30pm at:

- [Kitsilano Beach](#);
- [Spanish Banks East](#) (Locarno);
- [Spanish Banks West](#); and
- [Sunset Beach](#).



Components of the pilot project involved new responsibilities for lifeguards including guidance for beach users and the regular placement of Life Saving Federation standard black and white quartered beach flags (moved by lifeguards to high water and low water with the tides). Staff also arranged for the installation of temporary beach signs, a [website page](#), and social media to inform and educate users and the public about the pilot and locations.

Once the first pilot project was completed, an online survey was launched in October of 2021. In total, 317 responses were received, and the results of this engagement were shared in a [Board Briefing Memo](#) (December 17, 2021) and was overall deemed to have been successful from the public's perspective. This led to the pilot being repeated for the summer of 2022, with the same approach and format as the summer of 2021, but with improved signage, and adjustments to the launch area at Spanish Banks East/Locarno Beach.

Current By-Law & Changes Needed

Due to the success of both pilots, designated beach locations for the launch and recovery of non-motorized watercraft have been repeated every year since 2021. Public feedback has been positive, with no issues reported on the beach, and watercraft users are pleased to see the implementation of the On Water strategy in action. However, a change in the [Parks Control Bylaw](#) (section 22 (e)) is required to enable non-motorized craft to launch from these four locations. The City's legal department has drafted the recommended bylaw verbiage that will be brought by staff to the Board for decision to support this change on March 11, 2024.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Tiina Mack". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Tiina Mack (she/her)
Director, Planning & Park Development

/ml/ed/vt

Copy to: PB Leadership Team
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