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## Colwood mulls regional park



Esquimalt Lagoon has long been identified as an area of interest for a regional park by the Capital Regional District.

Amy Dove/News staff

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Colwood is exploring the merits of turning Esquimalt Lagoon into a regional park.

“In reality it is a regional attraction and a regional value so I think it’s sort of appropriate it’s managed by that broader governance structure,” said Coun. Judith Cullington.

The lagoon has long been identified in the Capital Regional District Parks master plan as an area of interest, but Colwood and the CRD would have to agree to include it in the regional park base.

It makes sense to look into the idea now as CRD Parks is reviewing its master plan, Cullington said.

There may also be some cost savings and opportunities for interpretive programming, she added.

That being said, there are a lot of questions to be answered before councillors are ready to say if they support the idea or not.

“There are some questions that need to be asked,” Cullington said. “The question on my mind is how do the people who live around the area feel about that?”

Esquimalt Lagoon, buffered from the ocean by Coburg Peninsula, is a federal migratory bird sanctuary. Colwood is responsible for costs to maintain the roadway, bridge and washroom, as well as bylaw and fire protection among other services. The Department of National Defense owns small pieces of the peninsula, including a structure near the bridge.

“It’s been a long desired by Colwood to have a regional park in the area,” said Coun. Cynthia Day.

Not all were in favour of exploring the idea, however, especially not without consulting the public first. Coun. Ernie Robertson called for a referendum on the matter before any discussions with CRD.

“Forget the Esquimalt Lagoon Stewardship Initiative and the CRD and everyone else, we should be going to the people of Colwood,” he said. “This is a Colwood park that we worked really hard to get under municipal control.”

“I am against reducing our asset base,” added Coun. Brian Tucknott.

Council directed staff to discuss with CRD what it would mean for the area to be a regional park.

If the idea was further supported, that information would be brought to the public for discussion.

“The public is going to ask a lot of questions ... the only way to get those answered is to actually sit down with the CRD and say ‘OK, what does

this actually mean for us?” said Coun. Gordie Logan. “It’s important we actually have the answers.”

reporter@goldstreamgazette.com

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