

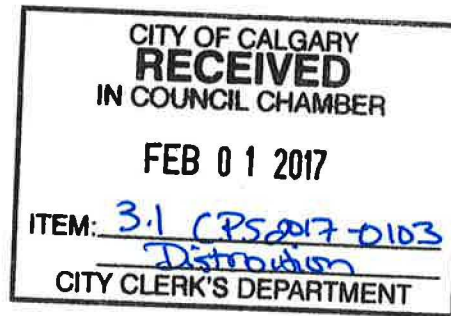


Calgary River Valleys champions and engages the public in the protection, appreciation and stewardship of Calgary's rivers, creeks, wetlands and watershed resources.

We are the voice of our rivers.

January 19, 2017

Laura Smith
Business and Policy Planner
Calgary Parks
The City of Calgary



Dear Ms. Smith,

Re: Draft River Access Strategy

Calgary River Valleys would like to thank you for providing a copy of the draft River Access Strategy. We were pleased to be included in the stakeholder consultation for this important project. CRV appreciates that this effort recognizes the desire of the public to enjoy the river and aims to offer safe and environmentally sensitive access that will better protect this important City asset.

The draft strategy is a comprehensive document which has benefitted from the collaborative effort of several internal stakeholders and consideration of a range of City mandates and objectives. The tight timelines demanded an innovative approach to soliciting public and external stakeholder input. The on-line approach allowed CRV membership and volunteers to participate efficiently and the "discussion" component allowed participants to learn from and respond to other ideas and viewpoints as the project evolved.

Overall, the draft Strategy speaks to issues of particular concern to CRV including; avoiding environmentally sensitive and erosion prone areas, offering improvements to riparian areas and fish habitat conditions, and promotion and education leading to changed public behaviours that respect the ecological value and functions of the rivers.

CRV would also like to take this opportunity to make some observations based on our review of the draft document. Please see the attached for your consideration or response.

It is understood that the River Access Strategy is a first step. Should approval be given to proceed, Calgary River Valleys would welcome the opportunity to provide ongoing input to the more detailed




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review and design of potential sites as well as explore the role our organization could play in a public engagement/education program.

Sincerely,



Michael Kenny
President, Calgary River Valleys

c.c. Councillor Keating, Ward 12
Councillor Carra, Ward 9
Councillor Pincott, Ward 11
Anne Charlton, Director, Parks
Harpreet Sandhu, Team Lead, Resource Strategy, Water Resources
CRV Circulation

encl.



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Calgary River Valleys - Comments of Draft River Access Strategy

- **Brown Trout Redd Survey Results :** In addition to the 2015 Brown Trout Redd survey by Trout Unlimited, Calgary River Valleys has conducted Brown Trout Redd counts in the Lower Elbow River since 2009 (with City Parks and Water Resources staff attending from time to time). In our on-line comments we advised that our data and mapping can be made available to the River Access Strategy team. We don't believe any of the proposed access sites on the Lower Elbow River would provide concerns with respect to recent spawning sites particularly given that Browns spawn in October outside of highest public use timeframes. However, we note the rise of extreme sports and that these adventurers/athletes can be disruptive during early spring/late fall spawning season and maybe even in the winter which are critical times for certain species. Human activity along the rivers throughout the float/paddling route can be disruptive to habitat along the way and should be addressed as part of a regional impact assessment of potential sites as well as through a public education program.
- **Promotion and Public Education:** CRV sees opportunities for ongoing assistance in delivery of engagement that leads to appreciation of and behaviours that support protection of the river asset. We would recommend development of ongoing seasonal campaign with visual media and City website video clips that are more engaging than just print. CRV has sought media attention the last couple of years of our annual red count in large part to try to sensitize the public to the ecological function and sensitivity of the rivers. The River Access Strategy offers an opportunity to bring information to the public about how we can "enjoy the river responsibly".
- **Other Use specific amenities:** Reference to "Other Use specific amenities" including spectator seating, wave channel and slalom gates is associated with development of an event venue which we believe is beyond the scope of the Access Strategy. CRV would be very concerned if support for the Strategy and/or lack of objection to any particular river access site is interpreted as being CRV suggesting the site is appropriate for uses and development above and beyond river access points. CRV requests that reference to such facilities be removed from this document acknowledging that such discussion will come up on a site specific basis around the development of such amenity venues, rather than the access point itself.
- **Vendor Services:** Reference to provision of vendor services is concerning especially if this is to include food vendors. Concerns expressed in CRV input on-line noted that such services should be limited to access points where they are already provided, for example, parks or other public spaces. Original City documentation of principles for the River Access Strategy specifically discouraged loitering. Loitering will result in increased negative impact on the environment, natural habitat, garbage, and potential vandalism. Encouragement of commercial uses at the access site is not in keeping with the expressed principles of access strategy. Support of business opportunities created by provision and promotion of appropriate access points should not be implemented by establishing commercial activity at the access site itself.



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- **Monitoring:** As suggested in CRV's on-line comments, and in addition to monitoring for damage to access sites resulting from flooding, there is a need for ongoing assessment of the environmental health of sites by identifying indicators of degradation at time of site development and implementation of an ongoing monitoring program to address concerns as they arise. It was recommended that the resources to undertake such a program be secured as part of the budget. Alternatively this could be identified as a responsibility of Water Resources.
- **Commercial Operator Permitting/Scheduling system :** Earlier CRV input expressed concern about potential over use and conflicting uses that already exist in popular parks including for example Bowness Park and suggest that such potential conflicts could be more fully addressed in the Strategy. Even if individual recreational paddlers that might otherwise go to Bowness Park are encouraged to use the Stoney Trail access site, the existing eddies will attract training operations with larger trailers resulting in parking conflicts. While not wanting to make things more difficult for the commercial operators, a permitting/scheduling program could offer designated parking to reduce conflict with regular park users. We bring attention to concerns around Bowness Park in particular but note that these concerns would exist for other popular sites where potential conflicts also need to be addressed.
- **Detailed Site Evaluation and Design Considerations:** CRV would welcome the opportunity for continued involvement in more detailed site studies and appraisals noting that information arising from this work may identify sites on the current proposed list as unsuitable. Design considerations, from the specific access path and launch location to vegetation protection or improvements can play significant roles in achieving the goal of minimizing the environmental impact of these amenities. Our members have identified the need and opportunity for signage and other education tools, not only for safety purposes but to encourage stewardship and responsible use.

