

Willowbrook Community Parkland

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The best safeguard for our community is to recognize and find value in the unique and invaluable qualities of our park, to support its preservation, to insist it be kept as a natural forest in perpetuity, as well as to promote active stewardship in ourselves and others. It is crucial that we be vigilant in both educating and motivating our community to honour and protect the park's **intrinsic**¹ and life-supporting attributes.

Figure 1: Upper meadowland near boundary

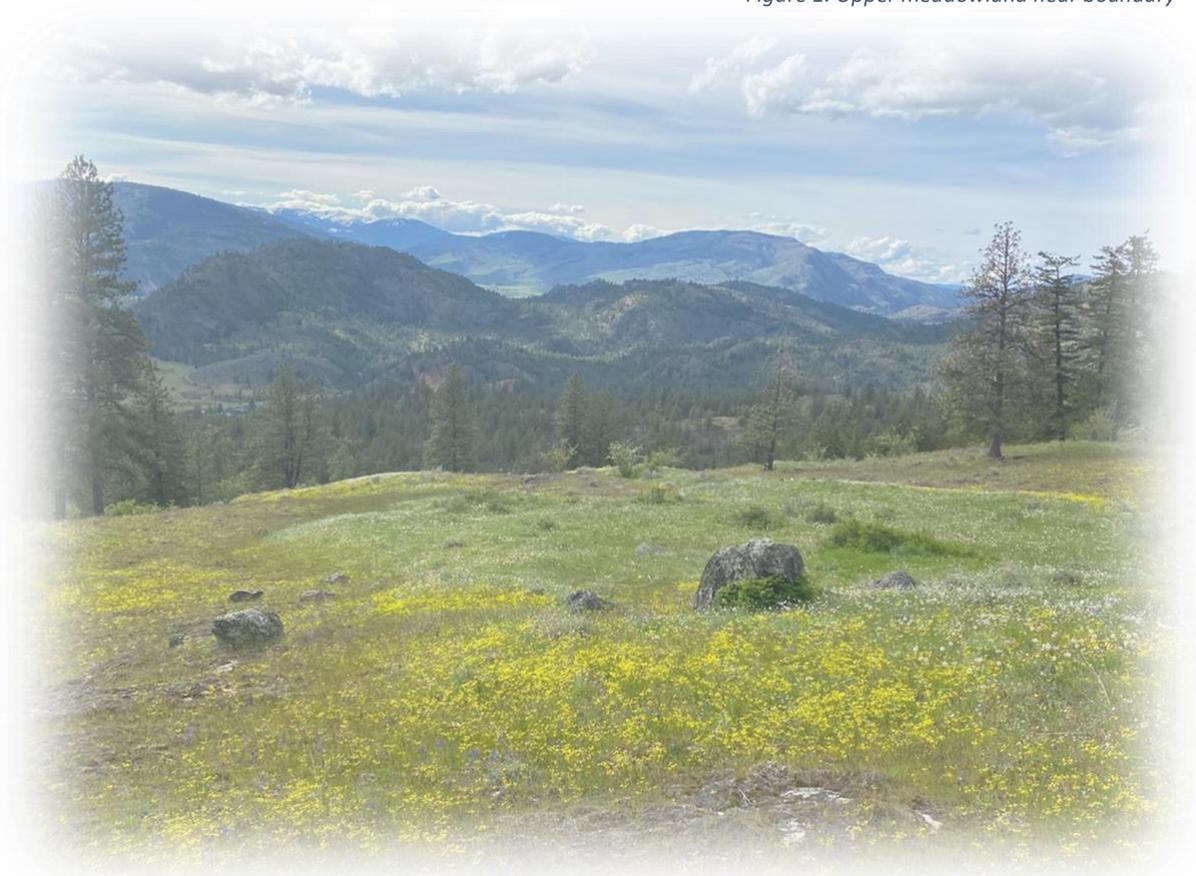


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History

In 1972, District Lot 26 was subdivided by Willowbrook Development Ltd into 54 residential lots plus a utility lot, an airstrip, and a tennis court lot. The Subdivision was named Willowbrook Acres. Later changes to the airstrip and utility lots created 4 additional residential lots, making it a total of 58.

According to the Sales Prospectus, each lot buyer was to receive 160th undivided interest in some adjacent property to be used as park, consisting of approx. 480 acres east of the subdivision (RA-Resource Area Zoning 160 acres and 320 acres). This interest in the parkland was included in the purchase price of the lots. The park is comprised of District Lots 3097 & 2073, plus Lot 57 2.03acres (SH3s-Small Holdings 3 Site Specific Zoning) in the subdivision (which was originally a tennis court, and is now a riding ring). This lot provides access to the main park land. Additional information about the riding arena can be found in the Willowbrook Community Riding Arena report.

In order to administer the park property, a company called Willowbrook Parkland Corp. was incorporated in 1979, and title to the property was registered in the name of the Corp. The Corp. was authorized to issue 160 shares. Each lot owner was entitled to one share, with the balance being held by the Willowbrook Development Ltd. for future distribution. Shares were issued for the original 54 lots; but Willowbrook Development Ltd. refused to release shares for the utility lot and/or the lots from the former air strip until Duncan Campbell, a Penticton lawyer, was hired and Willowbrook Development Ltd. did, in fact, release the shares for these four additional lots bringing the total number of lots to 58 and 102 shares belonging to Willowbrook Parkland Corp.

Each shareholder is entitled to one vote only in the affairs of the Corporation, no matter how many shares are owned so no one can control the vote. When a lot is resold, the share for that lot is transferred into the name of the new owner within 30 days. Currently, a \$20 administration charge is levied on each share transfer to cover the costs of the Corporation, which are typically limited to various Provincial Government filing fees.

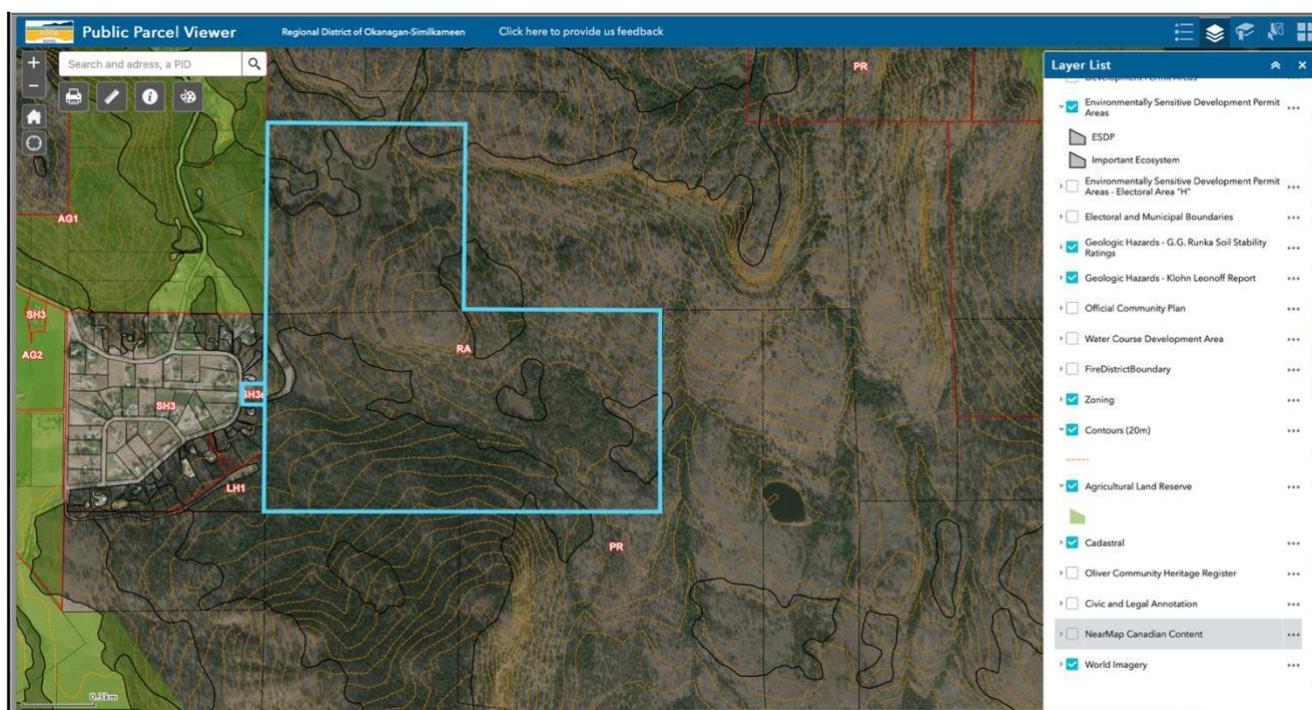
To provide a way to make the park available to the whole community, a non-profit society named Willowbrook Community Society was incorporated and granted a 99-year lease on the parkland property in May 1980. The terms of the lease require the Society to pay the property taxes plus \$1 per year. As the land is only used for recreational purposes by members of the Society, the property is now exempt from property tax. The Willowbrook Society looks after the Willowbrook Parkland that is kept in its wilderness state for hikers, horseback riders, and community members. It is the responsibility of the society to collect membership dues and to assist, develop and foster community spirit in the Willowbrook Community subdivision.

The Willowbrook Community Society has annual costs: director's insurance, annual provincial filing fees, office supplies, community events, maintenance fees etc. The nominal annual membership fee of \$25 is required by anybody wanting to use the park, resident of Willowbrook or not. This fee is payable online at willowbrookparkland.com. Members enjoy the annual Fall Fair, which is a community event hosted in September where contests, games, prizes, face painting, live music and tables from local stewardship societies and businesses are provided free of charge. The community also provides a safe and fun Halloween loop for trick-or-treaters as well as Christmas Caroling each year.

In addition to administration of the Parkland, the Society provides an organization for the benefit of the community in recreational, social and cultural activities as well as other community interests. All rules, regulations and activities of the society are decided by the members at the annual general meeting at the entrance to the park in June of each year.

Membership is open to anyone wishing to join and willing to abide by the rules and regulations of the Society. There are currently two types of memberships in the Willowbrook Community Society. Anyone living within the Willowbrook Community receives a voting membership for their \$25, while members from outside the Community receive non-voting memberships. Memberships can be paid online at willowbrookparkland.com. Regardless of the type of membership, there are no differing restrictions on park usage. Present regulations prohibit hunting, shooting, fires or BBQs, camping, motorized vehicles, cutting trees, mineral or energy exploration/development, damming of water sources, or building structures. Also prohibited are the use of 4-wheel drive or other vehicles, which destroy the terrain.

Figure 2 Map Outlining Parkland. Note the park is designated as an Environmentally Sensitive Area with development permits required. Also required is an assessment by the Okanagan Indian Band Archaeologist. ^T



Challenges to the Forest:

- Drought
- High evaporation due to extreme heat
- **Dwarf mistletoe**²
- Fire
- Hikers and mountain bikers that create new trails instead of staying on sanctioned trails
- Garbage left on trails (e.g. toilet paper, wrappers)
- Introduction of non-native plants (e.g. raspberry planting)
- Cutting down living trees (e.g. fort building, Christmas trees)
- Increased traffic from outside the community
- Soils that are easily disturbed, erode easily and are slow to recover ^A

Ecosystem:

The area to which we live in is highly sensitive to disturbance, and contains a variety of ecosystems ranging from shrub-steppe to brushlands, and from wetland to mixed forest. It goes without arguing that such ecosystems are necessary for the survival of numerous species of both plants and animals. Species include—but are not limited to—the western rattlesnake, painted turtle, bats, spade-foot toads, ungulates like the white-tailed deer and moose, cougars, bobcats, black bears, badger, and many species of birds; further, lichens and mosses live in the surrounding area, providing nutrients to land and species. ^A

Now, many animals—in particular birds—are only found in and around the Ponderosa Pine forests of British Columbia and ten species of bat are found in the hot, dry interior, along with Canada's only praying mantis, with grasslands diverse in flora and fauna. ^B Here, in the South Okanagan, shrub-steppe ecosystems are habitat for 30% of the **Red-listed**³ and 46% of the **Blue-listed**⁴ vertebrates in British Columbia, meaning several are listed as endangered or threatened, respectively. Also, more than twenty-four invertebrates exist only in the Okanagan Desert, with an additional eighty species occurring nowhere else in Canada. ^{CDE} Unfortunately, the Antelope Brush Ecosystem of the Bunch Grass **Biogeoclimatic Zone**⁵ is one of the four most endangered ecosystems in Canada. ^O

Climate:

Willowbrook Park is located in the low to moderate elevation rain shadow area of the Interior Plateau, ^F where winters are mild and spring through fall is generally hot and dry. A unique feature of our park is that it includes more than one biogeoclimatic zone: Bunchgrass (BG) and Ponderosa Pine (PP). The PPBG zone is one of the hottest and driest geographic areas in Canada; it supports some of the most at-risk species and ecosystems in Canada, thus making it one of the most fundamental areas for wildlife and habitat conservation in British Columbia. ^{AF}



Figure 3 Rocky terrain and Ponderosa Pines

Topography⁶ and Soil:

Most of our area was formed by volcanic and seismic processes and presently, our area is semiarid and has a moderately severe water deficit. ^F The parkland itself consists of **Brunisolic soil**⁷ which lacks moisture and topsoil as the result of a low ability to retain water. ^{FG} In addition to sand and silt, there are high mineral levels with portions of clay, and little to no organic matter on top of the mineral soil. ^{FH}

Endangered¹⁰ Species

Many species of red and blue-listed endangered wildlife inhabit the White Lake Grasslands Protected Area. These include 2 amphibian species, 5 reptile species, 15 bird species, 8 mammal species, 2 insect species, and 3 plant species. ¹

Fauna^{9 QR}:

Information here is taken from the surveys done in White Lake Grasslands Protected Area (which states there are 183 bird species in the area) ^J, and the website of the Okanagan Similkameen Stewardship that notes the Okanagan Valley has one of the highest concentrations of species at risk in Canada. ^R

Birds

Red Listed	Blue Listed
<p><i>Picoides albolarvatus</i> (white-headed woodpecker), <i>Oreoscoptes montanus</i> (sage thrasher), <i>Ammodramus savannarum</i> (grasshopper sparrow), <i>Buteo swainsonii</i> (Swainson's hawk), <i>Buteo regalis</i> (Ferruginous hawk), <i>Falco peregrinus</i> (peregrine falcon), <i>Falco mexicanus</i> (prairie falcon), <i>Centrocercus urophasianus</i> (sage grouse), <i>Otus kennicottii macfarlanei</i> (western screech-owl), <i>Athene cunicularia</i> (burrowing owl), <i>Icteria virens</i> (yellow-breasted chat), <i>Spizella b. breweri</i> (Brewer's sparrow), <i>Chondestes grammacus</i> (lark sparrow)</p>	<p><i>Cypseloides niger</i> (black swift), <i>Coccothraustes vespertinus</i> (evening grosbeak), <i>Charadrius vociferus</i> (killdeer), <i>Tringa flavipes</i> (lesser yellowlegs), <i>Contopus cooperi</i> (olive-sided flycatcher), <i>Botaurus lentiginosus</i> (American bittern), <i>Ardea Herodias</i> (great blue heron), <i>Tympanuchus phasianellus columbianus</i> (Sharp-tailed Grouse), <i>Grus canadensis</i> (sandhill crane), <i>Tyto alba</i> (barn owl), <i>Otus flammeolus</i> (flammulated owl), <i>Aeronautes saxatilis</i> (white-throated swift), <i>Melanerpes lewis</i> (Lewis' woodpecker), <i>Sphyrapicus t. thyroideus</i> (Williamson's Sapsucker), <i>Empidonax wrightii</i> (gray flycatcher), <i>Catherpes mexicanus</i> (Canyon Wren), <i>Dolichonyx oryzivorus</i> (bobolink)</p>

Insects^{PR}

Red Listed	Blue Listed
<p><i>Argia vivida</i> (vivid dancer), <i>Satyrrium behrii</i> (Behr's hairstreak), <i>Satyrrium semilunar</i> (half-moon hairstreak), <i>Cicindela parowana</i> (dark saltflat tiger beetle), <i>Danaus Plexippus</i> (monarch butterfly), <i>Bombus occidentalis</i> (western bumble bee)</p>	<p><i>Callophrys affinis</i> (immaculate green hairstreak)</p>

Amphibians

Red Listed	Blue Listed
<p><i>Ambystoma tigrinum</i> (tiger salamander), <i>Rana pipiens</i> (northern leopard frog)</p>	<p><i>Spea intermontane</i> (great basin spadefoot toad)</p>

Reptiles

Red Listed	Blue Listed
<p><i>Hypsiglena torquata</i> (desert night snake), <i>Phrynosoma douglasii</i> (pigmy short-horned lizard)</p>	<p><i>Pituophis catenifer deserticola</i> (gopher snake), <i>Coluber constrictor</i> (yellow-bellied racer), <i>Charina bottae</i> (rubber boa), <i>Crotalus viridis</i> (western rattlesnake) <i>Chrysemys picta</i> (painted turtle)</p>

Mammals

Red Listed	Blue Listed
<p><i>Taxidea taxus</i> (badger), <i>Lepus townsendii</i> (whitetailed jackrabbit), <i>Lasiurus blossevilli</i> (western red bat), <i>Antrozous pallidus</i> (pallid bat)</p> <p><u>Extripated in S.Okanagan</u></p> <p><i>Ursus arctos</i> (Grizzly Bear), <i>Rangifer tarandus</i> (Caribou)</p>	<p><i>Ovis canadensis californiana</i> (California bighorn), <i>myotis thysanodes</i> (fringed myotis), <i>sylvilagus nuttallii</i> (nuttall's cottontail), <i>Euderma maculatum</i> (spotted bat), <i>Corynohinus townsendii</i> (townsend's big-eared bat), <i>Reithrodontomys megalotis</i> (western harvest mouse), <i>Myotis ciliolabrum</i> (w. small-footed myotis), <i>Perognathus parvus</i> (Great Basin Pocket Mouse), <i>Spermophilus saturates</i> (Cascade Groundsquirrel), <i>Gulo gulo luscus</i> (Wolverine), <i>Martes pennanti</i> (Fisher), <i>Taxidea taxus</i> (Badger), <i>Synaptomys borealis artemisiae</i> (northern bog-lemming)</p>

Flora⁸:

Since site assessments have not been done in Willowbrook Parkland, I have provided on information posted for the White Lake Grasslands Protected Area that surrounds the park: ¹

Phase	Trees	Shrubs	Forbs and Grasses
Dry	<i>Pinus ponderosa</i> (ponderosa pine)	<i>Amelanchier alnifolia</i> (saskatoon), <i>artemisia tridentata</i> (big sage), <i>A. frigida</i> (pasture sage), <i>Chrysothamnus nauseosus</i> (rabbit brush)	<i>Festuca saximontana</i> (rocky mtn. fescue), <i>Festuca idahoensis</i> (Idaho fescue), <i>Crepis atrabarba</i> (slender hawksbeard), <i>Astragalus miser</i> (timber milk-vetch), <i>Agropyron spicatum</i> (bluebunch wheatgrass), <i>Balsamorhiza sagittata</i> (balsamroot), and <i>Achillea millefolium</i> (yarrow)
Wet	<i>Pinus ponderosa</i> (ponderosa pine), <i>pseudotsuga menziesii</i> (douglas-fir)	<i>Amelanchier alnifolia</i> (saskatoon), <i>Symphoricarpos albus</i> (snowberry), <i>rosaspp.</i> (roses), <i>acer glabrum</i> (douglas maple), <i>mahonia aquifolium</i> (tall oregon-grape), and <i>cornus stolonifera</i> (res-osier dogwood)	<i>Agropyron spicatum</i> (bluebunch wheatgrass), <i>Koeleria macrantha</i> (June grass), <i>poa sandbergii</i> (sandberg's bluegrass), and <i>Antennaria dimorpha</i> (pusseytoes)

While *Asclepias speciosa* (showy milkweed) is not endangered, it is vital to the survival of the monarch butterfly (red-listed). ⁵ There are a few locations within Willowbrook Parkland where milkweed grows and it's important to note the significance of the plant so as to not remove it or alter it in any way.

Red Listed Plants ¹	Blue Listed Plants ¹
<i>Agastache urticifolia</i> (nettle-leaved giant-hyssop), <i>Pyrocoma carthamoides</i> var. <i>carthamoides</i> (Columbia goldenweed)	<i>Epipactis gigantea</i> (giant helleborine), <i>Calochortus lyallii</i> (mariposa lily)

Management:

Tourism to the Okanagan Valley is increasing annually and it heightens at the peak of the fire season June-August, with over 4,000 tourists visiting Oliver each year. ^K Willowbrook Parkland poses a significant attraction to said tourists given it's quiet and pristine nature. It is advertised by various websites such as visitsouthokanagan.com/hiking-the-south-okanagan/ and in the Oliver & District Parks and Recreation Guide.

As of late, there is a proposed **National Park Reserve**¹¹; its third stage encompasses White Lake Grasslands Protected Area and mandates increased tourism. ^L That said, we have an obligation to preserve and maintain Willowbrook Park in its natural wilderness state and must continue to respect conservation values, particularly the needs of red and blue listed wildlife and plants. Let us work to educate the community and visitors alike about the significance of the park. As stated in Richard Cannings book, *British Columbia A Natural History*, "we must reconnect our society with its lifegiving ecosystems". ^B Being the only true desert in Canada, ^M it is essential that we keep this area in its' natural state. The Okanagan Valley is one of the most threatened ecosystems ^N and we are extremely lucky to have Willowbrook Parkland to use and enjoy but it must be done responsibly.



Figure 4 Springtime Sagebrush

Park Rules:

As outlined in the 99-year lease with Willowbrook Park Land Corporation, we have an obligation to protect Willowbrook Parkland. The original directors of the corporation knew the importance of the land we are stewards for. The following are rules outlined in the 99-year lease the Willowbrook Community Society signed with Willowbrook Park Land Corporation.

- Leave it as you find it, or better
- No motorized vehicles
- No hunting
- No fires or BBQs
- No tree cutting
- No non-members
- No mineral or energy exploration/development
- No damming of any water source
- No man-made structures of any kind



Figure 5 Autumn Trembling Aspen upper meadow

Vocabulary:

1. **Intrinsic:** Belonging naturally; essential.
2. **Dwarf mistletoe:** Small, seed-bearing plant lives exclusively as a parasite on different species of living coniferous trees. It causes localized swelling of the bark and wood, causing abnormal clumping of branches and will reduce tree growth as well as kill the tree.
3. **Red-listed Species:** Species that are considered to be at the highest risk of extinction or extirpation within the province. This includes species that are designated as endangered or threatened, as well as those that are considered extirpated (no longer found in the wild in BC, but exist elsewhere). The Red List is maintained by the BC Conservation Data Centre and is used to identify species requiring immediate conservation attention and recovery efforts.
4. **Blue-listed Species:** Species considered to be of "Special Concern". This means they have characteristics that make them particularly sensitive or vulnerable to human activities or natural events, but they are not currently threatened with extinction. Blue-listed species are not as immediately at risk as red-listed species (which are endangered or threatened), but they are still of conservation concern.
5. **Biogeoclimatic Zone:** British Columbia's landscape is divided into 14 biogeoclimatic zones, which are large geographic areas with similar climate and vegetation patterns. These zones are part of the Biogeoclimatic Ecosystem Classification (BEC) system used for forest management in the province. They represent distinct ecosystems characterized by similar climate, vegetation, and soils.
6. **Topography:** Forms and features of land surfaces.
7. **Brunisolic Soil:** One of three orders of forested soils in Canada that have undergone only minor alterations from the parent material. They occur on both acidic parent materials from igneous and metamorphic rocks and non-acidic parent materials from sedimentary rocks.
8. **Flora:** Plants of a particular region, habitat or geological period.
9. **Fauna:** Animals of a particular region, habitat or geological period.

10. **Endangered:** A species of animal or plant that is seriously at risk of extinction.

11. **National Park Reserve:** An area that is managed like a national park but is subject to one or more Indigenous land claims.

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