



May 13, 2021

MEMO TO : Park Board Commissioners

FROM : Donnie Rosa - General Manager, Vancouver Board of Parks and Recreation

SUBJECT : **On Water Strategy Implementation 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 strategy, and to inform you about a pilot project that will be launching later this month for designated non-powered watercraft launch and recovery access at four Vancouver beaches.

Background

In June 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 on-water recreation activities involving small watercraft powered by people and other natural elements. There is a wide range in types of non-motorized watercraft activities popular in Vancouver, including:

- canoeing
- dragon boating
- kayaking
- kite surfing
- outrigger
- paddle boarding
- rowing
- wind surfing
- 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 the Burrard inlet near Coal Harbour. They focus on five key directions to bring Vancouver closer to its vision for high-quality, accessible, non-motorized watercraft recreation, including:

1. Expand opportunities and participation
2. Increase physical access to the water
3. Improve safety
4. Protect and enhance the environment
5. Foster opportunities to socialize and build community

On Water Strategy Implementation Projects

Following approval of the strategy, staff established a cross-departmental implementation team spanning across the Park Board's Planning and Park Development, Business Services, and Recreation Services groups, as well as including the City's Engineering Services and Real Estate and Facilities Management (REFM) departments.

Following are updates on the notable projects/initiatives related to the On Water Strategy to date.



a) Designated Non-motorized Watercraft Launch and Recovery Access Pilot Project

Staff initiated this pilot project in response to the On Water recommendation: “Consider providing designated launch areas at beaches and parks managed by the Park Board”. It was initially planned to run in 2020, but was delayed due to COVID-19. This year, the pilot will run from May 22 to September 6, which aligns with the Park Board’s 16-week outdoor aquatic season and responds to safety concerns raised among users.

Staff have selected four locations in consultation with the cross-departmental implementation team to trial the designated launch areas (see Appendix A). Pilot locations will include:

- Kitsilano
- Spanish Banks
- Sunset Beach
- Locarno

Additional components of the pilot project will include:

- updating lifeguard responsibilities and guidance for beach users;
- denoting the designated launch and recovery access areas (11:30am to 8:30pm, May-Sep), with black and white quartered beach flags compliant with the International Life Saving (ILS) Federation’s standard for flags;
- installing temporary beach signs (see Appendix B), updating the website, and using social media to inform and educate users and the public about the pilot;
- surveying residents and users after beach season to help evaluate the project and inform future recommendations.

b) False Creek Speed Buoy Upgrade

In Q4 2020, the City’s Blueways program installed two new and larger speed buoys at the entrance of False Creek indicating the five-knot speed zone. The buoys replaced the speed buoys previously installed 10-years ago. Additionally, staff completed several repair and upgrade projects to the water taxi and public use ferry docks in False Creek.

c) False Creek Water Quality Improvement Initiative

As part of the [Aquatic Environments Action Plan](#) (2020), which aims to advance tactical actions and focus on addressing microbial pollution to False Creek, Trout Lake and Vancouver’s coastal beaches in addition to aligning and integrating with approved environmental policies (e.g. [Biodiversity Strategy](#), [Urban Forest Strategy](#) and [Rain City Strategy](#)). REFM provides regular updates on the water quality conditions in False Creek. This update includes a summary of actions taken in the previous year and any actions planned/underway for the current year. The annual update also contains staff recommendations for further actions. City staff are currently working on this report and anticipate a 2021 Aquatic Environments Action Plan update in Q2/3 2021. Links to False Creek water quality annual updates ([2018](#), [2019](#), and [2020](#)) are included for further information.

d) Sewage and Rainwater Management Plan for Vancouver

In May 2020, Council approved funding for a [Sewage and Rainwater Management Plan for Vancouver](#) – long-term solutions to address pollution from sewage and urban run-off along with risks presented by climate change, aging infrastructure and urban growth. This plan supports [Park Board recommendations](#) to accelerate efforts to address combined sewer overflows



(CSOs) and restore water quality in False Creek and other waters surrounding Vancouver. This work will also provide insight on the impacts of pollution, including CSOs and urban runoff to Vancouver's coastal biodiversity, where Park Board beaches experience closures due to high E. coli bacteria levels. City staff will report back in 2021 with a progress update and include short-term accelerated actions to reduce pollution from sewage and polluted urban runoff.

Next Steps

Park Board staff will continue to communicate and collaborate cross-departmentally to implement the On Water Strategy. Staff will also report back to the Board on the designated non-motorized watercraft launch and recovery access pilot project by the end of 2021.

In response to possible questions and concerns from the public regarding the pilot project, staff have prepared an info sheet that can be used as a resource should members of the public or stakeholders reach out to Commissioners directly (see Appendix C). Staff will continue to expand on this information on the project webpage and respond to enquiries as they arise.

Regards,

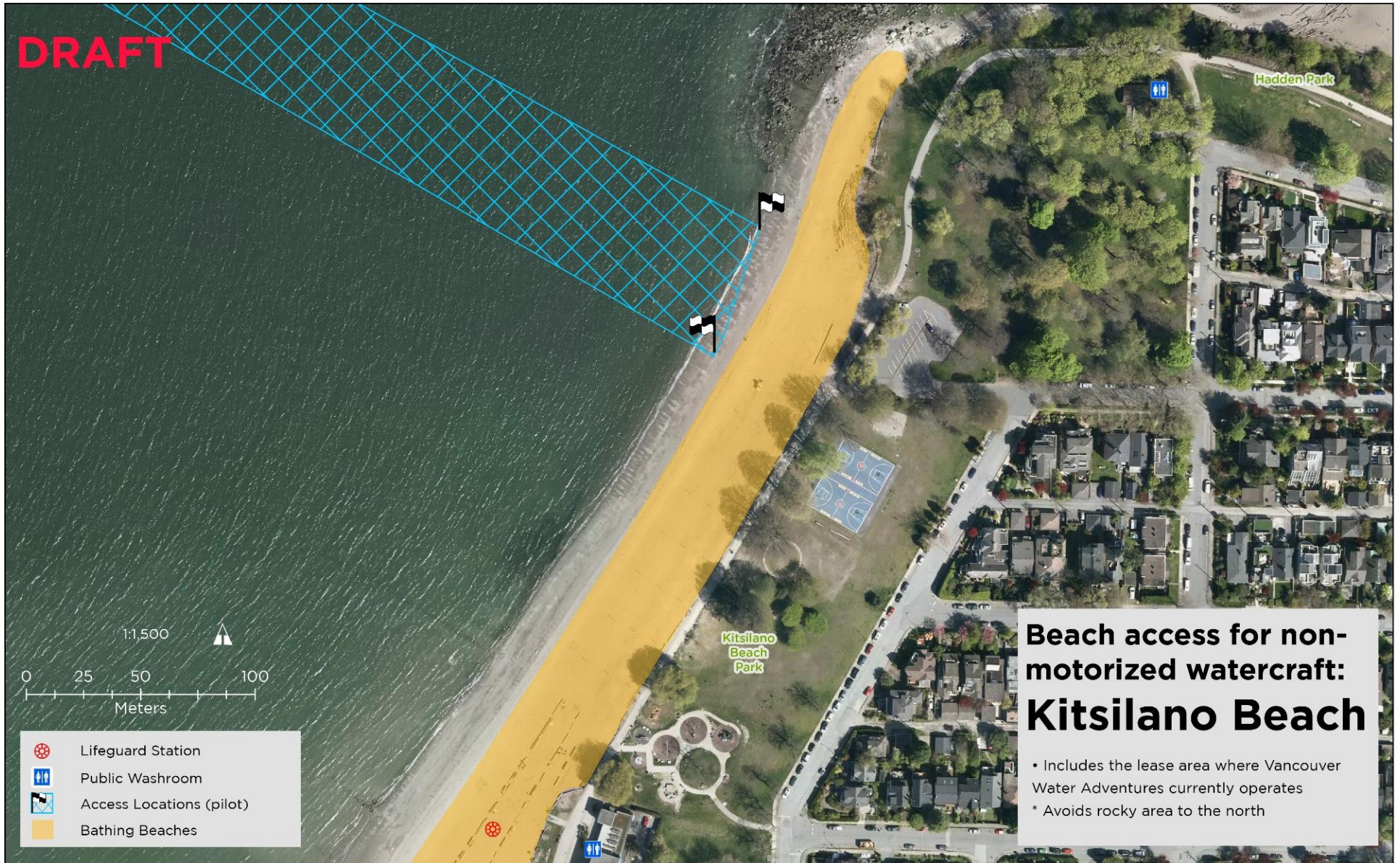
A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Donnie Rosa', written over a light blue circular stamp.

Donnie Rosa (*she/they*)
General Manager - Vancouver Board of Parks and Recreation

/sw/ee/

APPENDICES: A, B & C

Copy to: PB Senior Leadership Team
Planning, Policy & Environment
PB Communications



Beach access for non-motorized watercraft: Locarno Beach

- Away from main swimming area
- Windy location supports windsurfing and kiteboarding



DRAFT







NON-MOTORIZED WATERCRAFT ZONE





This access zone is part of a pilot project to support water-based recreation

- Obey lifeguards. Launch and recover between the designated black and white beach flags.
- Unless launching or recovering, stay a minimum 300 metres from swimming beaches and watch out for other users.
- Review Transport Canada's Safe Boating Guide for safety requirements.
- Carry your own personal safety equipment. Personal flotation device (PFD) strongly advised.
- Use at your own risk. Stay within your ability and limits.
- **NO MOTORIZED WATERCRAFT.**

If you wish to comment on this pilot, please e-mail:
onwater@vancouver.ca by September 20th, 2021
Additional pilot information available at vancouver.ca/on-water



We are on the unceded territories of the x̱məɬkʷəjəm (Musqueam),
Sḵw̱gwú7mesh (Squamish), and səlḻwətəɬ (Tsleil-Waututh) Nations.



Questions & Answers

On Water Strategy – Designated Launch Areas Pilot

1. Q: When will I be allowed to launch/come ashore from these authorized locations?

A: The pilot project aligns with the Park Board's 16-week outdoor aquatic season, which runs from May 22 to September 6. Non-motorized watercraft activities are only managed by lifeguards during the beach season, at guarded beaches, while lifeguards are on duty. Access is unregulated outside of these days, times and locations.

2. Q: What non-motorized watercraft am I allowed to launch/come ashore from these authorized locations?

A: Includes canoes, kite surfers, wind surfers, dragon boats, kayaks, paddle boards, small craft sail boats, row boats, and outriggers.

3. Q: Why are there not temporary loading and unloading zones provided in nearby parking lots?

A: Loading zones are still under consideration and potentially could be included in a future phase of this pilot.

4. Q: Why are you doing this pilot project now?

A: As part of the Board approved 2019 [On Water Strategy](#) implementation strategy this was an important short-term action item to move forward.

5. Q: Why was this not started last summer?

A: The pilot project was delayed due to COVID-19.

6. Q: How do I know where to launch and come ashore?

A: Signs on the beach with a map will detail launch/come ashore areas, information will be posted on the On Water webpage, and black and white quartered flags will denote the designated launch area daily from 11:30am to 8:30pm when lifeguards are on duty.

7. Q: Will there be trailer parking or storage provided?

A: Unfortunately, at this time the Park Board has no capacity for trailers in our parking lot system. One trailer requires four parking spots and due to the length and size of trailers and the vehicle required to tow the trailer, maneuverability within our lots can be challenging.