



CITY OF MAPLE RIDGE  
**NEWS RELEASE**

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**More than 600,000 visitors take to Maple Ridge parks and trails**

**Maple Ridge, BC:** With many residents looking to spend more time outside, the City of Maple Ridge has been working to ensure its recreation sites stay open – and safe.

Over the past five months, local parks and trails have experienced record-high numbers of visitors.

“Since the start of the pandemic and especially this summer, we’ve seen unprecedented traffic at parks and trails across Maple Ridge,” said David Boag, General Manager Parks, Recreation and Culture.

Between April 1 and August 31, more than 630,000 visitors were recorded at five city-operated parks. In that same timeframe, an additional 130,000 visits were tracked at eight city-run trails. Data was collected using sensors installed at entrances and parking lots.

The most popular destination was Maple Ridge Park, with more than 250,000 visitors entering its main parking lot over the spring and summer.

Whonnock Lake Park experienced heavy use in July and August, with visitations increasing by approximately 57 per cent compared to the same time period in 2019. On busy summer weekends, the park was at full capacity between 11:00 a.m. and 6:00 p.m.

Average trail usage was also up across Maple Ridge, with most monitored trails experiencing a 50 per cent increase in use year-over-year. On peak days, certain trail locations recorded up to 700 users throughout the day.

As residents flocked to local outdoor areas throughout the summer, the City worked to ensure that everyone respected social distance.

“Bylaw Compliance Officers (BCOs) and Community Safety Officers (CSOs) have been very proactive in educating residents to comply with social distancing guidelines,” said Chad Cowles, Manager of Community Social Safety Initiatives.

Cowles says BCOs and CSOs continue to patrol parks citywide to ensure physical distancing, particularly Maple Ridge Park due to the high volume of visitors.

The City is continuing to monitor the situation and will implement any further recommendations issued by the Public Health Officer. In the meantime, residents are reminded to use the City's outdoor spaces responsibly.

"When discovering Maple Ridge's amazing greenspaces, let's all be mindful of others by respecting the direction of Dr. Henry to stay healthy and enjoy the outdoors at two metres apart," said Mayor Mike Morden.

"We all need to continue to do our part to stop the spread of COVID-19 and end this pandemic."

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### **Background Information:**

- At parks and trails across Maple Ridge, the City installed physical distancing signage, reintroduced portable washrooms to allow visitors to wash their hands, established enhanced cleaning protocols at public washrooms and launched the Parks Ambassador Program.
- When recreation centres closed, the City redeployed staff from these facilities to create the Parks Ambassador Program. Beginning in April and extending throughout the summer, they patrolled City parks seven days a week and were tasked with educating visitors on physical distancing guidelines. They also wiped down frequent touch points and checked that appropriate safety signage is posted. Currently, Parks Ambassadors are still visiting local parks on weekends.
- During the summer, CSOs were focussed on picnic areas in Maple Ridge Park to ensure people who weren't in the same family unit were appropriately distanced at two metres. They also delivered social distancing compliance messaging to those setting up picnics in the meadow area of the park.
- As an added precaution, the City's Parks, Recreation & Culture department now requires picnic shelter renters to submit a COVID-19 Safety Plan and sign a COVID-19 Rental Addendum, in addition to existing rental practices.
- Other outdoor amenities such as playgrounds, tennis courts and sports fields are open for informal use. In addition, the fitness centre, indoor sports courts and gymnasium at the Maple Ridge Leisure Centre have reopened on a pre-registration basis. On July 13, the Hammond Outdoor Pool welcomed swimmers for its summer season, which concluded on Labour Day.