

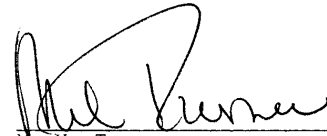


# MIRACLE BEACH PROVINCIAL PARK MASTER PLAN



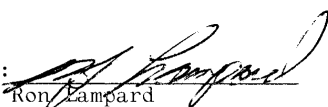
Mr. George Trachuk  
Regional Director  
South Coast Region

This Master Plan for Miracle Beach Provincial Park  
is submitted for your approval.



M. H. Turner  
Manager of Planning  
and Conservation  
South Coast Region

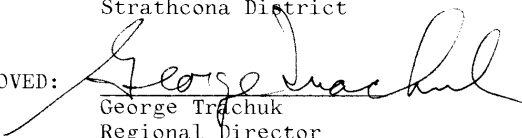
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Ron Lampard  
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DATE: 89-07-12

APPROVED:



George Trachuk  
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South Coast Region

DATE: July 13/89.

Ministry of Parks

South Coast Region

**MIRACLE BEACH PROVINCIAL PARK**

**MASTER PLAN**

**JUNE, 1989**

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## **1.0 PLAN HIGHLIGHTS**

Miracle Beach Provincial Park, established in 1950, as a Class 'A' park, encompasses 135 hectares of ocean front and coastal forest with a 700 metre sandy beach as the main natural feature. Catering to the travelling public, Miracle Beach offers a variety of quality recreational opportunities, including warm ocean swimming, beach activities, easy access camping, picnicking and interpretation.

The park is fully developed with a 193 site campground and two day use parking lots with a total capacity of 230 vehicles. Each year, over 30,000 campers and 140,000 day visitors enjoy the recreational opportunities at Miracle Beach.

The role of the Ministry of Parks in the Campbell River Planning Unit is to enhance tourism by providing ocean-oriented day use and camping opportunities and by conserving and protecting the Georgia Strait Lowlands and Islands Regional Landscape.

The primary role of Miracle Beach Provincial Park is to present and protect an outstanding ocean beach that offers numerous recreational opportunities, in association with Black Creek and its estuary. In addition, the adjacent coastal forest has a developed campground and day use facilities to serve the travelling public.

Essentially, the main issues involved in this plan focus on: protecting the beach area, Black Creek estuary and upland; improving park facilities; enhancing visitors' experiences; and increasing park attendance. Specifically, the plan recommends:

1. Improve existing park facilities to enhance the visitor's park experience:
  - a) day use area:
    - expand picnic area along beach frontage;
    - develop open grass area for recreation activities, i.e. frisbee, ball toss, etc.;



- construct outside showers adjacent to day use changehouse;
- improve existing beach access and shoreline trails;
- develop group picnic area.

b) campground:

- construct shower/change building;
- construct sani-station;
- provide disabled sites;
- open play area in campground.

c) develop group campground.

2. Negotiate to secure easement over spring well site which provides water supply to park.
3. Review with Ministry of Transportation and Highways alternative access to subdivision properties so as to divert non-park use traffic within the park.
4. Review the function of the visitor centre by exploring the amalgamation of district operation services in the same building as visitor services. Relocation of the amphitheatre near the visitor centre is also recommended.



## **2.0 BACKGROUND REPORT SUMMARY**

The following information is summarized from the "Background Report" attached to this plan as Appendix 1.

### **2.1 Location and Climate**

Miracle Beach Provincial Park is situated on the east side of Vancouver Island, nearly halfway between Courtenay and Campbell River. Bordering Elma Bay and the Gulf of Georgia, this Class 'A' provincial park is accessible from Highway 19 via Miracle Beach Drive, approximately twenty-five kilometres north of Courtenay. Considered a major holiday/recreation area, the Courtenay/Comox/Campbell River region has a population nearing 60,000 residents (Figure 1).

The climate, moderated by the Gulf of Georgia, is mild year-round with warm, dry summers and cool, moist winters. The daily mean temperate averages 2.2°C in January and 17.4°C in July. Mean monthly precipitation averages 190 mm in January and 28 mm in July.

### **2.2 Park Origins**

Miracle Beach Provincial Park was previously privately owned. The provincial government purchased from Mr. Frank Pottage over fifty-seven hectares of land and, in 1950, Miracle Beach Class 'A' Provincial Park was established. In 1952, a game reserve was created over the foreshore area of Miracle Beach Provincial Park and later, in 1956, was added to the park. Additional lands were purchased and donated over the years until 1972, when the park reached its present size of 135 hectares.

### **2.3 Park Resources**

Miracle Beach Provincial Park consists of 108 hectares of generally flat, forest-covered upland and 27 hectares of marine foreshore.



Miracle Beach is a tangle of logs and driftwood deposited by winter tides and strong southeast winds. The beach slopes from large rocks and pebbles out to flat rocks and sand. This fine sandy beach and its intricate intertidal environment is over 700 metres in length, providing the major recreational focal point of the park.

The vegetation, typical of Douglas-fir forest, has been altered by logging and is mainly covered by second growth. Hemlock, Alder, Sitka Spruce and Maple are interspersed amongst the Coastal Fir.

Black Creek flows near the northern park boundary and provides a major spawning channel for an estimated 50,000 Coho salmon. The creek flows into Elma Bay and its estuary is well used by migratory birds and a variety of waterfowl.

Fishing, camping, swimming, beach play, sunbathing and nature appreciation attract visitors and area residents to this scenic park. Miracle Beach also provides transients with a gateway to Vancouver Island's heartland, Strathcona Park and the salmon fishing capital of British Columbia, Campbell River.

Key planning issues focus on the Black Creek estuary and the beach itself with its fragile marine environment. Advertising and marketing the park to reflect its natural attractions and improving campground/day use facilities will also be addressed.

### **3.0 REGIONAL AND PROVINCIAL CONTEXT**

Contained within the Campbell River planning unit, Miracle Beach is one of 14 Class 'A' provincial parks that offer land and marine based recreational opportunities, including easy access camping and/or day use opportunities at Elk Falls, Smelt Bay, Morton Lake, Fillongley and Strathcona Parks (Figure 2).

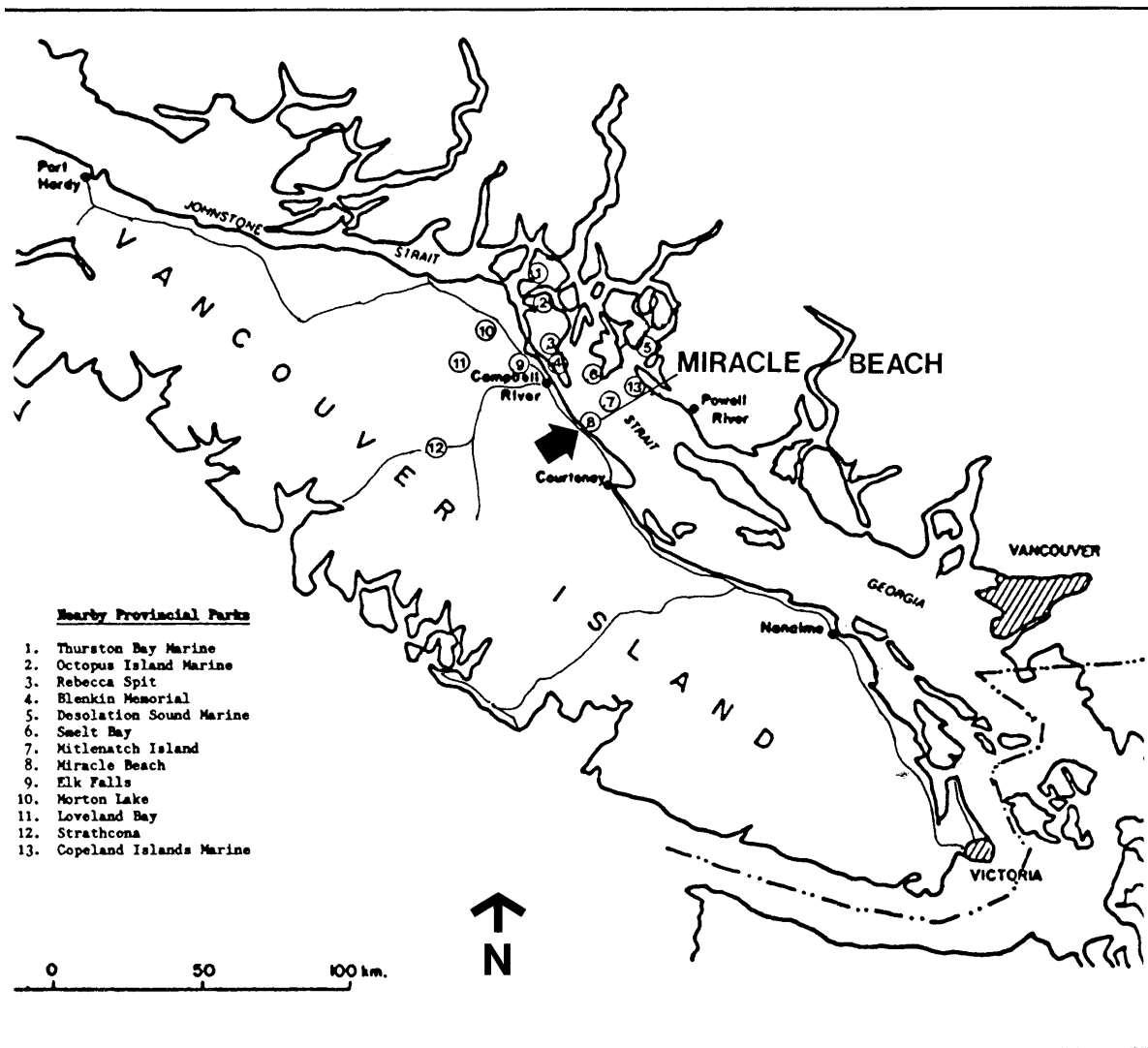
The provision of recreational opportunities by the private sector is substantial. As the single major supplier, the private sector provides an assortment of commercially-oriented recreational activities, such as nordic and alpine skiing, camping, fishing and boating.

Forest land recreation is provided by the Ministry of Forests with 29 recreational sites. These sites are usually more out-of-the-way and offer minimal development.

Regional and community park opportunities include 45 community parks, mostly under one hectare in size. The Regional District of Comox-Strathcona has three existing parks: Seal Bay, Capes and Goose Spit. All three provide nature study opportunities; however, there is little or no development.

Attendance at provincial parks in this area is high, with over 400,000 participants recorded for the summer of 1988. The origin of these recreationalists appears to be evenly distributed between local residents, other B.C. residents and visitors from outside the province.\*

\* Source: B.C. Parks: Campbell River Sub-Regional Plan



REGIONAL CONTEXT

Figure 2

#### **4.0 MIRACLE BEACH PROVINCIAL PARK**

##### **4.1 Role of the Park**

The **recreation role** for Miracle Beach will be to continue to provide a variety of opportunities within the park, including camping, picnicking, nature appreciation, scenic viewing, sunbathing, swimming and beach play. Emphasis on improving existing facilities for park visitors, so as to complement all types of recreation opportunities, is recommended. The park will offer activities for both campers and day users and will work with private sector operators in the area so as to offer a comprehensive recreation package. Dissemination of recreation and park information for the district will also be provided.

The **conservation role** for Miracle Beach is to provide a special natural area that protects the scenic and natural features of the park with emphasis on the shoreline, the sandy beach and Black Creek estuary.

## **5.0 ZONING**

### **5.1 Introduction**

To assist in park planning and management, a zone procedure is used to divide each park into logical land and water units based upon uniform and consistent management objectives. Zones are intended to reflect future land use, levels of management and development permitted and the level of human activity that is to be accommodated. If the nature of the zone needs to be more specific, then it is broken down into subzones which give more detail in respect to area, objectives and management guidelines.

Miracle Beach Provincial Park is divided into two zones: Intensive Recreation Zone and National Environment Zone, with two subzones: Service subzone and Special Features subzone (Figure 3).

### **5.2 Intensive Recreation Zone**

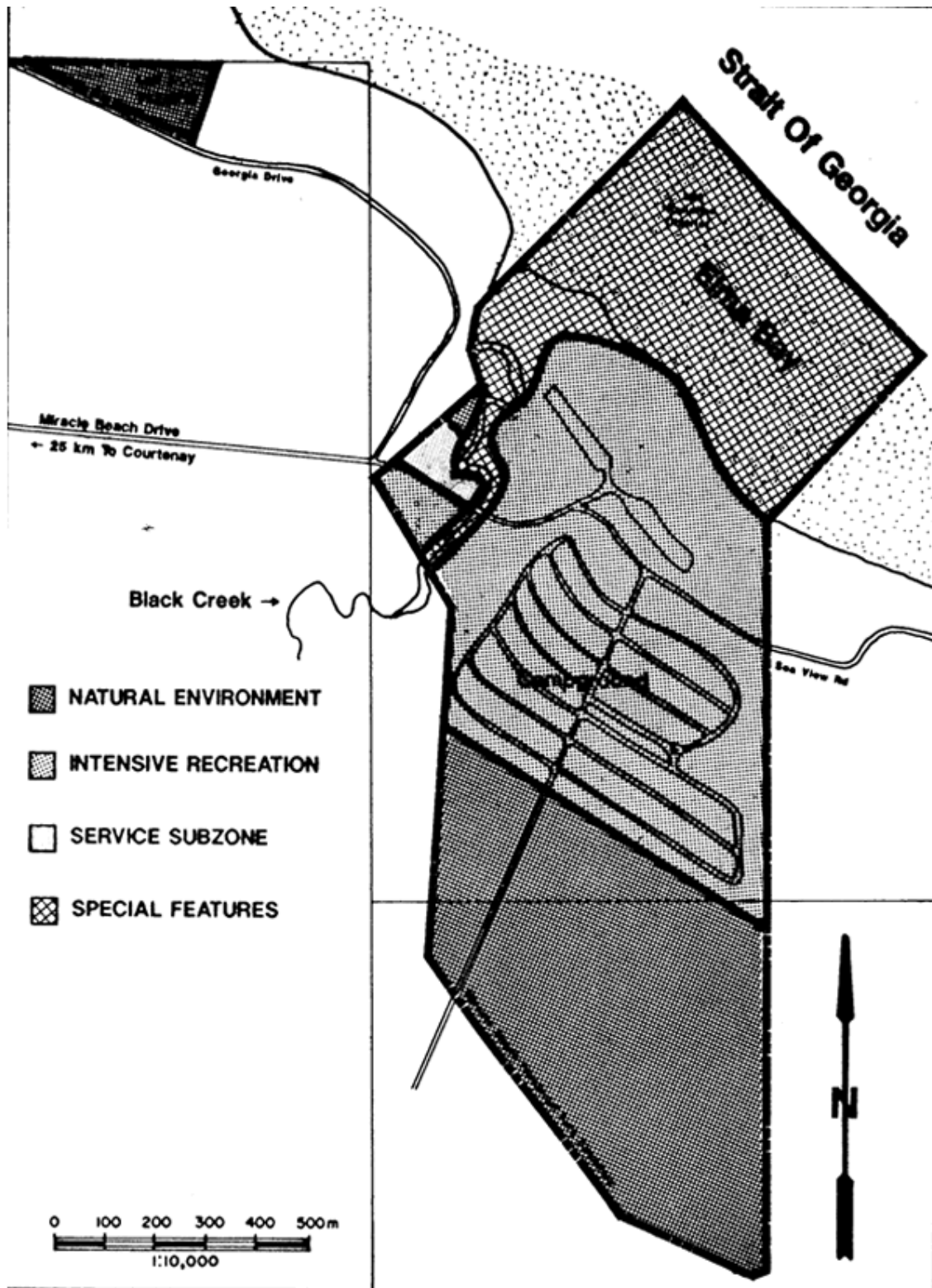
The intensive recreation zone provides for a variety of readily accessible facility-oriented outdoor recreation opportunities. Development levels are usually moderate to high with use levels of a high density.

This zone comprises the campground and day use area, including the visitor centres amphitheatre, picnic shelters and change house. In addition, the area where the park residence was once located is included in this zone to provide future group camping.

### **5.3 Natural Environment Zone**

The prime objective of this zone is to provide for a variety of easily accessible off-road outdoor recreational opportunities in a largely undisturbed natural environment. This zone is characterized by low use levels and minimal development.

The southwest portion of the park, excluding the campground, is designated as the Natural Environment Zone and will remain in a natural, undeveloped state.





## **5.4 Service Subzone**

This subzone provides for park operations facilities which expedite efficient management of the park.

The Strathcona Zone Service Yard is located within the Service Subzone. Staff and park equipment necessary to manage the park and district facilities are located here.

## **5.5 Special Feature Subzone**

The purpose of the Special Feature Subzone is to preserve significant natural or cultural resources, features or processes because of their character, fragility or heritage value.

### **5.5.1 Black Creek**

The only freshwater ecosystem in Miracle Beach Park is Black Creek. This creek, flowing into the northwest corner of the park and marking the northern boundary, is subject to freshets which allow the annual return of five to ten thousand spawning Coho and Chum salmon. The creek provides a perennial water supply, cooling shade, protection and food for juvenile Coho salmon, as well as Cutthroat and Rainbow trout.

In addition, the creek offers excellent interpretive opportunities, such as viewing areas and educational walks.

### **5.5.2 Estuary of Black Creek**

In the summer, the tidal effect of water levels on Black Creek are apparent 200 metres upstream from its mouth. Here, saltwater is trapped in stagnant, shallow pools and, at high tide, it floods into a small salt-marsh. This environment supports a wide variety of aquatic and terrestrial plant and animal species.

### **5.5.3 Miracle Beach**

Miracle Beach is a protected beach about 1/4 mile in width at low tide. Two types of beach substrate can be recognized: a pebble and small rock area and a sandy beach area, each of which harbours characteristic fauna. The park boundary extends to include the entire foreshore of L. 283, protecting the marine life.

## **6.0 NATURAL AND HERITAGE RESOURCES MANAGEMENT**

### **6.1 Introduction**

The overall management of resources will be based upon the *Park Act*, Park Regulations, ministry policies and the role of Miracle Beach Provincial Park in the system of provincial parks and recreation areas.

The resource management objective is to ensure that Ministry of Parks' goals are met by:

- protecting the natural and heritage resources of the park
- monitoring use impacts and resource conditions so that appropriate actions may be taken
- establishing resource guidelines that will protect the park's conservation/recreation resources

### **6.2 Objectives/Actions/Policies**

#### **6.2.1 Land Management**

##### **Introduction**

A triangular portion of the park (Lot 1, Plan 25715) has no direct connection from a conservation, recreation or administrative standpoint. In addition, the park's water supply comes from a spring well located south of the park.

##### **a) Objective**

To maintain parklands of high recreation values and transfer low value parklands to an appropriate agency.

##### **Actions**

- Discuss with the Comox-Strathcona Regional District the transfer of Lot 1, Sec. 8, Tsp. 5, Comox District (Plan 25715), donated by Mr. and Mrs. C. A. Corby which is superfluous to the park's needs.

## **b) Objective**

To secure the existing park water supply which is found outside the park boundary on private property.

### **Actions**

- Because the water supply (spring well) is privately owned, it is recommended a more formal arrangement with the owner, such as an easement over the spring well site, be negotiated to ensure a continued source of potable water for Miracle Beach Provincial Park.

## **6.2.2 Water Management**

### **Objective**

To maintain and preserve a high degree of water quality for Black Creek and the foreshore of Miracle Beach.

### **Actions**

- Park facility development will be minimal in these areas so as to lessen the impact from recreational and non-recreational uses.
- Ensure sanitary facilities are properly designed and located.

## **6.2.3 Vegetation Management**

### **Objective**

To retain the diversity of existing woodland and grassland species in the park as an evolving ecosystem that resulted from previous logging practices.

### **Actions**

- Facility development will be limited to the intensive use zone of the park. A vegetation management plan based on the premise that all other areas will remain in their natural state subject to hazard control is recommended.

## **6.2.4 Fish and Wildlife**

### **a) Objective**

To enhance the natural conditions found within the woodland, grassland and shoreline components so that the existing wild species inhabiting Miracle Beach Park are sustained.

### **Actions**

- Develop a wildlife management plan for the park and work with Fish and Wildlife to develop a stream management plan for Black Creek.

### **b) Objective**

To enhance viewing opportunities and increase those opportunities for the public to see and appreciate land and marine fauna.

### **Actions**

- Develop park facilities and an interpretive plan which adequately addresses this issue.

## **6.2.5 Cultural Resource Management**

### **Objective**

The native and Euro-Canadian history of the Miracle Beach area is significant even though there is only one archaeological site at Miracle Beach.

### **Actions**

- The promotion of cultural history will be directed through the visitor services program.



Visitor Centre, Nature House



Naturalist's Program: "Seining"

## **7.0 VISITOR SERVICES MANAGEMENT**

### **7.1 Introduction**

The visitor services concept for Miracle Beach Provincial Park is to enhance the recreational experience of park visitors by providing a variety of opportunities/facilities in a park that is basically developed. The improvement of existing facilities and addition of a group camping area will help to increase the public's enjoyment of this park.

The development of an improved information program in conjunction with local and regional visitor centres will become the main strategy in promoting the park.

### **7.2 Visitor Opportunities**

#### **Objective**

To encourage vehicular camping, group camping, bicycle destination and walk-in camping, picnicking, day use and beach activities and nature appreciation.

#### **a) Vehicular Camping**

Improve existing camping facilities, i.e. construct a shower building and a playground and pave the campground roads.

#### **b) Group/Bicycle/Walk-in Camping**

Alternatives to the existing and fully-developed vehicular campground are to construct a group camping area in the vicinity of the old park residence site and develop a bicycle and/or walk-in campground.



c) Day Use

- construct a rinse-off shower at the beach area and redevelop part of the day use area to provide a group picnicking area and opportunities for volleyball and horseshoes;
- extend the beach picnic area towards Black Creek to meet the growing demands for day use facilities/opportunities;
- the existing nature house or visitor centre is the oldest of its kind in our park system. It is recommended that present displays be redesigned. A strategy for the possible relocation of the visitor centre to another area in the park is also suggested, i.e. closer to campground, incorporated as part of administrative centre;
- the amphitheatre gets limited use due to its location and distance from the campground. It is recommended that it should be relocated closer to the campground.

### 7.3 Management Services

a) Headquarters and Service Yard

Miracle Beach is operated as part of the Strathcona District and is the administrative centre for the Strathcona Zone. Due to the age of the existing visitor centre, a new building that functions as both an administrative and visitor centre should be constructed near the park entrance.

b) Site and Facility Design Standards

All sites and facilities developed for public use will meet the design standards of the Ministry of Parks. Attention will be paid to consideration of safety, visual values and operational efficiency, while providing rustic, durable, and cost efficient products.

c) Safety and Health

The safety and health of park visitors and staff are paramount concerns. Natural hazards easily accessible to the public will be appropriately posted, removed or minimized. There will be periodic safety inspections of all high use areas. All normal precautions will be taken regarding safety and health.

**7.4 Promotion and Information Program**

Promotion and information is a critical step in making the public aware of the features and opportunities available and in encouraging visitation.

The park is currently promoted provincially through maps, brochures, and various media communication, as well as signs and slide shows (Visitor Centre) within the park.

Every effort should be made to develop a major promotion strategy involving Miracle Beach, Elk Falls and Strathcona Parks, in conjunction with the communities of Courtenay, Campbell River, and Gold River.

## 8.0 PLAN IMPLEMENTATION

The majority of actions recommended in this plan can be implemented immediately as part of the park's normal management procedures. Other actions, such as new development, will be phased in over a period of time as regional and district priorities dictate.

|                                   | PHASE 1  | PHASE 2   |
|-----------------------------------|--|---|
| 1. Natural and Heritage Resources |  |   |
| a) Land Management                | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- formalize easement over spring well site to secure potable water source for park</li><li>- review alternate road access of non-park users with Ministry of Transportation and Highways</li></ul> | discuss transfer of Lot 1, Sec. 8, Tsp. 5, Comox Dist. with Regional Dist.  |
| b) Fish and Wildlife Management   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- develop wildlife and stream management plans</li></ul>   | interpretive plan to increase viewing opportunities and nature appreciation |

|                                       | <b>PHASE 1</b>   | <b>PHASE 2</b>   |
|---------------------------------------|--|--|
| <b>2. Visitor Services Management</b> |  |  |
| a) Facility Development               |  |  |
| - campground                          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- shower facilities</li> <li>- playground</li> <li>- disabled campsites</li> <li>- pave campground roads</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- group campground</li> <li>- bicycle/walk-in campground</li> </ul> |
| - day use                             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- playground and horseshoe pitch</li> <li>- extend picnic area north (disabled standards)</li> <li>- outside beach showers</li> <li>- improve existing beach access and shoreline trails</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- group picnic area</li> <li>- repair parking lots</li> </ul>       |
| b) Management Services                | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- develop overall management plan (Visitor centre and district office functions)</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- construct new Admin/Visitor Centre complex</li> </ul>             |
| c) Promotion                          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- redesign displays in Native House</li> <li>- develop marketing strategy plan</li> </ul>   |  |

## **APPENDIX 1 - BACKGROUND REPORT**

## **APPENDIX 1 – BACKGROUND REPORT**

### **1.0 MIRACLE BEACH PROVINCIAL PARK**

#### **1.1 Introduction**

Miracle Beach Provincial Park is located on the east side of Vancouver Island where Black Creek drains into the Strait of Georgia. Bordering Elma Bay, this Class 'A' provincial park comprises 108 hectares of coastal forest and grasslands and 27 hectares of saltwater foreshore.

Located midway between Courtenay and Campbell River, road access to the park is via Miracle Beach Drive off Highway 19, some 25 kilometres north of Courtenay.

A popular summer destination, Miracle Beach Provincial Park offers a variety of recreational opportunities and a fully-developed campground and day use area for both visitors and local residents.

Historically, Miracle Beach occupies an important cultural transition zone between two major native cultures. To the north are the Kwakiutl Indians, with important historic centres on Quadra Island and across Discovery Passage at Campbell River. To the south, at Comox, are the Coast Salish Indians, with their present, northernmost major population area at Comox.

At present, no archaeological evidence exists that any direct native occupation of the park occurred. The area, however, was witness to early European exploration (July 1792, Captain Vancouver and his two ships, Discovery and Chatham, explored the Gulf of Georgia and Discovery Passage) and Indian movement by both Kwakiutl and Salish cultures.

In 1886, the Miracle Beach area was first surveyed and, shortly afterwards, logged. Since then, the area has been logged at least twice (1920's and 1930's).

Theed Pearce was the first known owner of the land bordering Elma Bay and named the bay after his wife. In 1948, Frank Pottage purchased a section of land, desiring to subdivide and access his property. Two years later, the provincial government purchased from Mr. Pottage over fifty-seven hectares and Miracle Beach Provincial Park was established. Additional lands were also purchased over the years until 1972, when the park reached its present size.

## **2.0 NATURAL AND CULTURAL RESOURCES**

### **2.1 Natural Resources**

#### **2.1.1 Physiography**

The gently sloping ground, occupied by Miracle Beach Provincial Park, is covered by unconsolidated gravel, sand and clay-type materials deposited by glaciers, rivers and the sea.

There are no known bedrock landforms within Miracle Beach Provincial Park. Upper cretaceous rocks of the Nanaimo group probably underlie all of the coastal lowland north of Courtenay. Volcanic rocks and granodiorite are the most common rock types and were probably transported to their present location by glaciers some 15,000 years ago.

The sandy, pebbly deposits between the parking lots and the beach are seashore deposits that have accumulated since the establishment of the present sea level.

Approximately 600 metres of protected shoreline along Elma Bay are occupied by the park. The terrain drops suddenly from the beach logs to round, smooth rocks and then seaward over sloping sand flats.

The main attraction of the park is, in fact, the beach. The occurrence of this sandy beach is the result of a number of factors, including tidal currents, ocean waves, longshore currents and Elma Bay itself.

To retain the sand beach, a series of beach groins were placed in an east-west direction at the south end. However, these groins contribute little towards assisting the sand deposition process.

#### **2.1.2 Fish and Wildlife**

The size and location of the park suggest that some of the fish and wildlife resources are transient and present only on occasion. Common mammals, such as Black-tail deer, raccoons, Red squirrels, mice and bats, are frequently observed by park visitors.



Black Creek, named because of the dark colour of its water, which is a result of a high content of iron metals, supports Coho salmon and Cutthroat and Rainbow trout. The creek and its estuarine environment host a variety of aquatic and terrestrial life indigenous to this area.

The Gulf of Georgia provides excellent fishing opportunities, especially in the Comox/Campbell River region. Reknowned for its salmon fishing, the waters off Miracle Beach contain all species of salmon, including Chinook, Sockeye, Chum, Coho and Pink, and a variety of cod and other bottom fish.

The beach habitat is a residence for gulls, diving birds and waterfowl. The tall fir trees are frequently observed containing bald eagles and great blue herons. Besides aquatic birds, the area supports a myriad of life forms which make up the marine invertebrates.

There exists a good list of flora and fauna for Miracle Beach (refer to Natural History Theme Study of Miracle Beach Provincial Park, 1988 B.C. Parks report).

### **2.1.3 Visual Resources**

The visual resources of the park consist of two main visual experiences; forested coastal upland and the beach and Gulf of Georgia.

Upon entering the park, and after leaving subdivision and farm development, visitors are surrounded by second growth Douglas-fir coastal forest as they drive along the paved road leading to the day use parking area and campground. In addition, a trail system has been developed through the forest and along Black Creek.

- \* Another theory to its dark colour is that the creek flows through peat and swamp areas.

In stark contrast to the forested upland part of the park, the beach has a variety of textures and surfaces, ranging from granular, coarse pebbles to fine sands. Bordering the beach, windswept logs placed helter-skelter frame the green, forested upland. Waves create interesting patterns in the sand and tidal pools make ideal safe and warm play areas for children. Clam mounds and sand castles dot the beach like a lunar landscape. From the beach, visitors looking eastward across the gulf can see the mainland and, on a clear day, perhaps Powell River. Pods of killer whales (orca) occasionally play offshore and all types of vessels cruise past the park on their recreational or business journeys.

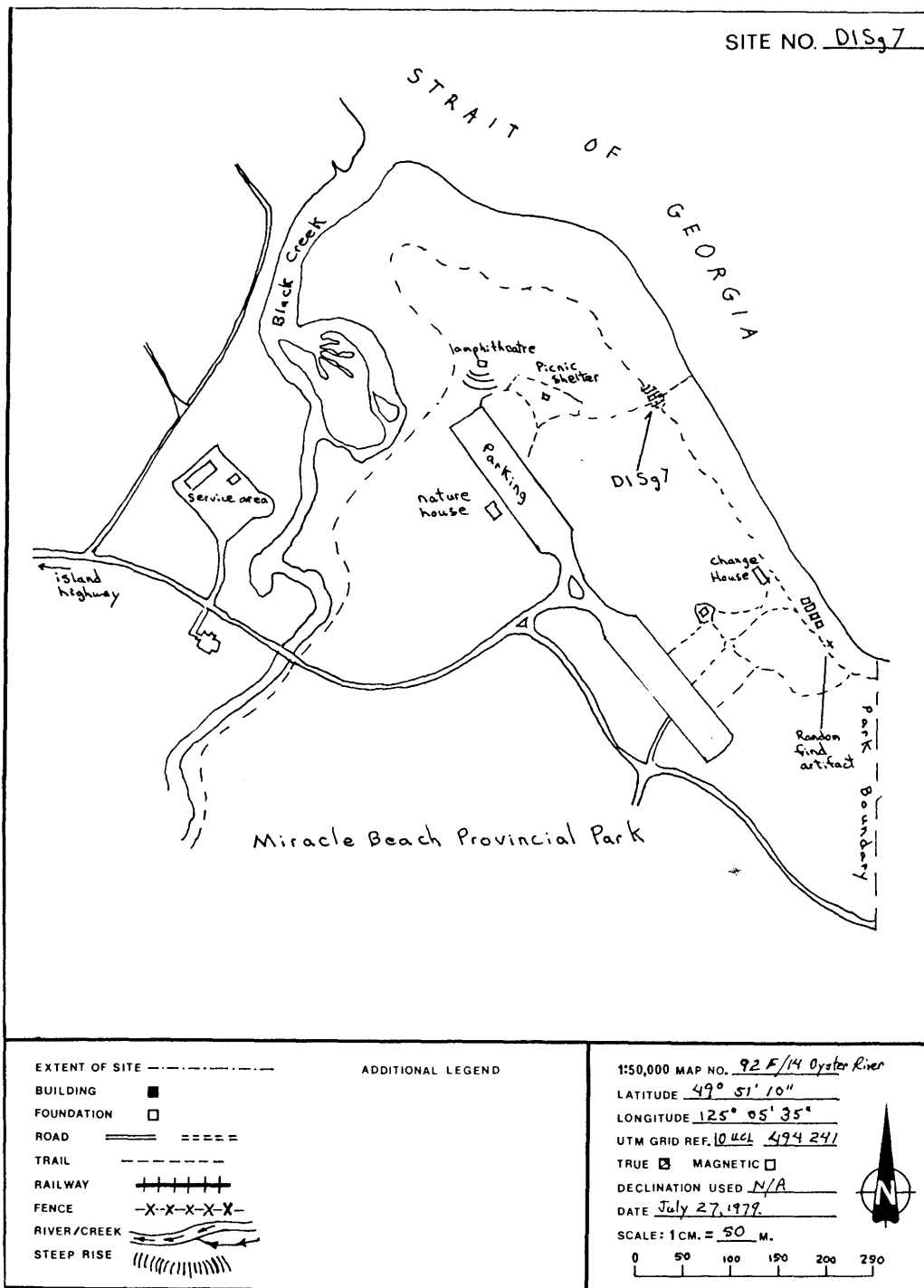
#### **2.1.4 Vegetation (Biogeoclimatic Zones)**

Miracle Beach is within the Dry Maritime Subzone of the Coastal Douglas-fir Biogeoclimatic Zone. Vegetation reflects the human history and logging of the area and park. The second growth trees consist of Red Alder (*Alnus rubra*), Western Hemlock (*Tsuga heterophylla*) and Douglas-fir (*Pseudotsuga menziesii*). There are still a few large Douglas-firs contained within the park along with Sitka Spruce (*Picea sitchensis*), Broadleaf Maple (*Acer macrophyllum*) and Black Cottonwood (*Populus trichocarpa*).

Common undergrowth species in the drier sites are Salmonberry (*Rubus spectabilis*), Salal (*Gaultheria shallon*) and Red Huckleberry (*Vaccinium parviflorum*). In the wetter portions are found Cascara (*Rhamnus purshiana*), Willow (*Salix sp.*) and Hardhack (*Spireae douglasii*).

#### **2.1.5 Climate**

The climate, moderated by the Gulf of Georgia, is mild year-round with warm, dry summers and cool, moist winters. The daily mean temperature averages 2.2°C in January and 17.4°C in July. Mean monthly precipitation averages 190 mm in January and 28 mm in July.



**ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES**

**Figure 4**

## 2.2 Cultural Resources

Though lying in an important area between the Coast Salish Indians in the south and the Kwakiutl Indians to the north, there is limited archaeological evidence that these cultures occupied the park.

Archaeological site DISg 7 (Figure 4), located off the beach trail, may have some prehistoric importance as one hammerstone was discovered there.

The area was first surveyed and logged in the 1880's.

Theed Pearce, a noted naturalist, was the first known owner of the land bordering Elma Bay and named the bay after his wife. In 1948, Frank Pottage purchased a section of land occupied by the present park and residential area. Pottage's desire to subdivide his land prompted the first interest in building road access to the Miracle Beach area. In 1950, Pottage donated 6.07 hectares at the mouth of Black Creek and sold 57.48 hectares with over 665 metres of waterfront to the provincial government for the purpose of establishing a provincial park. In 1952, a road was constructed to the park and park facilities were built. Since then, facilities have been expanded to include a day use parking lot, picnic shelter, group picnic shelter, campground, amphitheatre and visitor centre (nature house). The first nature house, erected in 1958, consisted of a one-room tent and, in 1962, the present day visitor centre was constructed.

The Black Creek area was settled by Mennonites arriving from the prairies in the early 1930's. These settlers came to the area originally to farm and later many men were employed as loggers by the Comox Logging Co. Prior to the arrival of these Mennonites, settlement of this area was scarce and restricted to local logging camps in the Black Creek and Oyster River area.

Another historical remnant includes an altered landscape, the result of logging operations in the 1880's, and again in the 1930's. Douglas-fir stumps, showing spring board notches, and a few mature trees are remnants of a logging legacy.

There are two theories concerning the origin of the name of Miracle Beach. The first reflects the area's aboriginal heritage. It is said that long ago an Indian princess was turned to stone - the stone being Mitlenatch Island. The beach from where the Indians observed this "miracle" today bears its name. However, this theory is probably only a good story and carries little weight.

The second theory recalls a major fire that swept through the area around the turn of the century. For some unknown reason, the area surrounding Miracle Beach was spared by a "miracle". This story has some credence as a few mature Douglas-firs are still found within the park, and they would not have survived a major forest fire.

### **2.3 Resource Analysis**

The most significant natural features of the park are the sandy beach and Black Creek with its tidal environment. In conjunction with the forested upland, these features play a role in addressing the overall conservation and recreation goals and programs of the division.

Miracle Beach is the main feature responsible for serving the division's recreation goals. Excellent swimming, beach play, sunbathing and nature interpretation/observation are the main attractions in this area.

Division conservation goals are served through the protection of Black Creek and its estuary and the beach/tidal zone which represent the special marine environments of the Gulf of Georgia.



Picnic Shelter (Douglas-fir Coastal Forests)



Miracle Beach – Note concrete groin at right

### 3.0 TENURES, OCCUPANCY RIGHTS AND JURISDICTIONS

|                         |   |
|-------------------------|---|
| Lease and Permits:      | PUP 243 - B.C. Hydro transmission line<br>PUP 339 - B.C. Telephone Co. telephone line<br>PUP 1004 - Regional District of Comox-Strathcona<br>(water pipeline within 4 metre right-of-way) |
| Fee Simple Holdings:    | - None  |
| Forest Tenures:         | - None  |
| Water Rights:           | - None  |
| Rights-of-Way:          | - Larkin Road - Ministry of Highways – 20 metre<br>right-of-way<br>- B.C. Hydro - 20 metre right-of-way<br>- B.C. Telephone - 5 metre easement  |
| Mineral Rights:         | - None  |
| Trespasses:             | - None  |
| Statutory Jurisdiction: | - None  |

## **4.0 EXISTING RECREATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES**

### **4.1 Visitor Facilities**

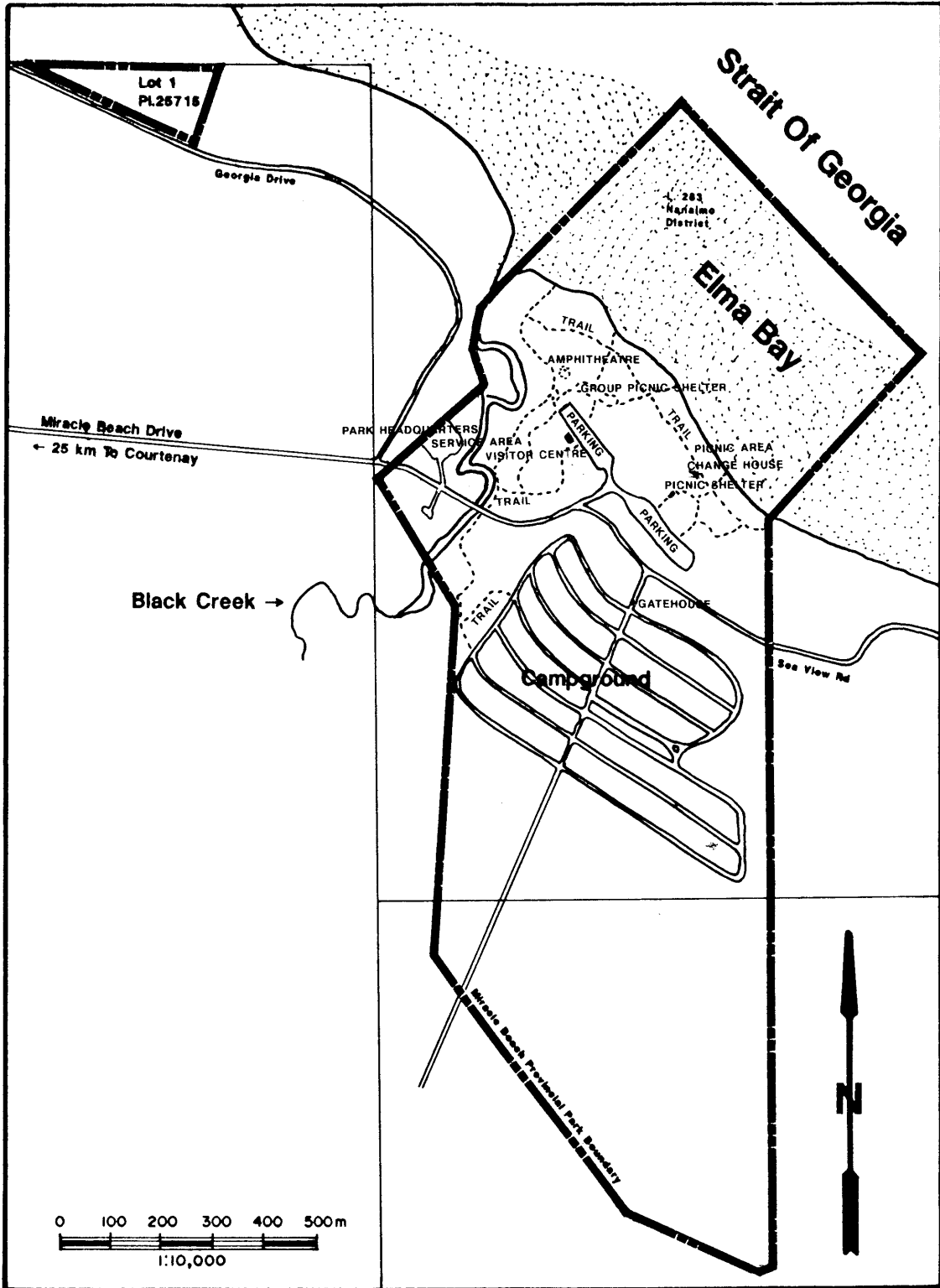
Miracle Beach Provincial Park has a fully-developed campground, consisting of 193 campsites, two day use parking lots (75 vehicle capacity each), a visitor centre, a group picnic shelter, an amphitheatre, a service yard and associated information/sanitation facilities. The sandy beach fronting Elma Bay is over 600 metres in length. A trail winds from the campground along Black Creek, forking past the visitor centre and amphitheatre to the beach (Figure 5).

### **4.2 Management Services**

The service yard also forms the administrative centre for the Strathcona Zone. Facilities include an office complex and service/storage yard.

Year-round staff are employed to manage this park and others within the zone. Seasonal staff assist with summer nature interpretation programs, fee collection, security and campground/day use maintenance.





**EXISTING DEVELOPMENT**

**Figure 5**

## **5.0 PARK ATTENDANCE AND VISITOR ACTIVITIES**

Miracle Beach Provincial Park is significant in the overall provincial park system as it contains a fine stand of mature Douglas-fir, a river estuary, migratory birds, a productive salmon stream and an excellent sand/pebble beach. These natural features, in addition to a fully-developed campground and day use area, explain why this park is so popular with both area residents and tourists.

It is interesting to note, however, that park attendance has decreased over the years. Its most prolific years were between 1973 and 1982, when campground occupancy rates ranged between 75% and 90%. During this period, the shoulder seasons (spring and fall) peaked in 1979 to 23% and 18% occupancy.

During the past four years, campground attendance has declined and, in 1987/88, the campground occupancy rate during July and August was 65% (Table 1). Explanations for the decline in attendance are only speculative and suggest these theories: a general decline in camping, changes in traffic patterns, saturation of camping on Vancouver Island, popularities of other parks (i.e. Rath Trevor and private sector campgrounds), a decline in family size and related activities and/or the lack of expected services such as showers and a sani-station.

| <b>Miracle Beach - Park Attendance</b> |                                 |                                      |   |
|--|---------------------------------|--------------------------------------|---|
| <b>Year</b>                            | <b>(Party Days)<br/>Day Use</b> | <b>(Party Nights)<br/>Campground</b> | <b>(By Contacts)<br/>Interpretation</b> |
| 1980                                   | 54211                           | 14183                                | 40791                                   |
| 1981                                   | 47373                           | 13596                                | 36385                                   |
| 1982                                   | 44087                           | 14293                                | 34310                                   |
| 1983                                   | 47767                           | 12257                                | 35541                                   |
| 1984                                   | 43849                           | 9664                                 | 59496*                                  |
| 1985                                   | 40369                           | 10244                                | 59786*                                  |
| 1986                                   | 42530                           | 9778                                 | 58028*                                  |
| 1987                                   | 52534                           | 11020                                | 39802                                   |
| 1988                                   | 44569                           | 11091                                | 59689 (Oct. 12/88)                      |

TABLE 1

To review and resolve the reasons for the decline in park visitation, a marketing strategy was formulated in 1986. It recommended the following:

1. Develop a master plan that addressed:
  - group camping facilities;
  - walk-in campsites;
  - hiking/horse trails;
  - group picnicking in day use area.
  
2. The division's advertising campaign should highlight some of the parks recommended by Park Management Plans.
  
3. A small portion of the district budget should be allotted for implementation of the advertising campaign for Miracle Beach Provincial Park in the local and regional areas.

\* Figures are not confirmed and should be used as guestimates only.



Beach is focus of recreational activities.  
Excellent sand beach and warm water.



Wildlife observation; Blacktail Deer feeding on Salal.

## **6.0 PLANNING ISSUES**

### **6.1 Natural and Cultural Resource Management**

#### Land Management

##### a) Secure Water Supply

As the existing water supply (spring well) for Miracle Beach Provincial Park is privately owned, it is recommended a more formal arrangement with the owner, such as an easement over the spring well site, be negotiated to ensure a continued source of potable water for the park.

b) Review alternate road access to private subdivision properties with the Ministry of Transportation and highways so that non-park use traffic might be re-routed.

### **6.2 Visitor Services**

##### a) Improving Park Attendance

In the past, Miracle Beach Provincial Park was one of the major destination camping areas on Vancouver Island. Since 1980, however, both campground and day use attendance has declined.

In 1986, a Visitor Services Plan analyzed the decline in park attendance and made recommendations how to better improve the marketing of this park.

##### b) Improving Advertising and Marketing

A major advertising effort will be initiated in conjunction with the local private resorts, the local Chamber of Commerce and information centres for both Courtenay and Campbell River. In addition, this advertising campaign would be promoted through local media outlets, i.e. radio, newspapers, cable TV, etc.

Proposed marketing themes will focus on new initiatives to highlight the park resources and opportunities found in the area, i.e. promote Black Creek as a major salmon spawning stream, Miracle Beach/Oyster River area as the "Gateway to Salmon Fishing Country", and Miracle Beach public/private sector joint sandcastle building contest.

c) **Improve Park Facilities to Reflect Visitors' Needs**

In the past, park visitors have complained about the lack of facilities, i.e. sanitation and showers, especially in light of the increased camper fee. A 1985 Visitor Satisfaction Survey varified the general complaint of lack of facilities.

A new shower building has been proposed in the campground. In addition, campsites adjacent to the proposed building will be converted into disabled access sites. Other suggested improvements include construction of a group campsite and campground play area, revamping and changing displays in the visitor centre and redesigning the day use picnic shelter area.

### **6.3 Management Services**

- a) Develop overall management plan which reviews the function of the visitor centre and explores the amalgamation of this service with the delivery of district operations.

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