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## "With Nature, For Nature"

August 4<sup>th</sup>, 2025

Re: Transferring Blackley Dike Trail to North Cowichan Authority

Dear Mayor and Council,

During the past two years, Nature Cowichan members have collaborated with CERCA to successfully remove broom from the dike trail, which had crowded out native vegetation and obscured views of the adjacent revived saltmarsh. The wildlife viewing platform recently constructed by CERCA and Western Forest Products (WFP), as well as CERCA's ongoing Purple Martin nest-box program have also significantly enhanced the visitor experience on this trail.

Nature Cowichan hopes to continue participating with CERCA and WFP on trail enhancement, by providing maintenance, planting native shrubs, and perhaps adding interpretative signage. In the past, working with the provincial dike authority has proven onerous and time consuming when seeking permission, arranging access and providing descriptions of work. We believe this could be expedited by cooperation with North Cowichan and our local Dike Authority instead. Since North Cowichan Municipality already has authority over more than a dozen dikes and/or dams this is not a new concept for this jurisdiction.

**James Denny**, with the BC Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship has suggested in earlier communications:

*"It might be of interest to you and [CERCA], to petition the District of North Cowichan to become the Diking Authority for Blackley Dike. If they were to become the local diking authority, they would be in the best position to work with local partners and to make local recreation decisions surrounding the dike. Local approaches to flood risk reduction, as well as recreation planning, are stronger when informed and directed by the relationships and values at the community-level."*

As work to rehabilitate the Dinsdale salt marsh at the south end of the estuary progresses, the Blackley Dike Trail will become the de facto alternative. This proposal presents a unique opportunity for our city to enhance our trail system by adding a new, already popular dike trail to our network. Thanks in advance for your support for this.

On behalf of the board of directors of Nature Cowichan,

Bruce Coates – President Nature Cowichan