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**Policy Title: Griffith Woods Natural Environment Park**  
**Policy Number: CSPS010**  
**Report Number: CPS2000-28**  
**Approved by: Council**  
**Effective Date: 2000 July**  
**Business Unit: Calgary Parks**

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### **BACKGROUND**

Griffith Woods Natural Environment Park remarkable for its size and spectacular setting is a much valued natural asset. This land and its diverse natural vegetation provide extensive habitat for a wide variety of habitat and is enriched by the water of the Elbow River. Prior to the establishment of the park, horses and cattle have extensively grazed portions of the area. Griffith Woods is unique on comparison to other Calgary Parks due to its dense tree and wildlife population and is known to Calgarians as a “forest” rather than a park.

### **PURPOSE**

The policy was established to provide sound management direction to the unique biophysical resources of Griffith Woods Natural Environment Park. Compatible visitor uses and management strategies as well as guidelines are specified to accommodate specific recreational activities which will impose minimal environmental damage to the forest.

By means of this policy, the area will be protected and managed to ensure it continues to fulfill its ecological functions while providing for sensitive human use.

### **POLICY**

[See attached policy document](#)

### **PROCEDURE**

[See attached policy document](#)

### **AMENDMENTS**

Effective 2016 February 01, Parks became Calgary Parks.

# GRIFFITH WOODS

## NATURAL ENVIRONMENT PARK



THE CITY OF  
**CALGARY**  
PARKS



### PARK IMPROVEMENT PROJECTS

#### WASHROOM FACILITY

A new washroom facility is to be constructed in fall 2004. The facility design is intended to be site-specific and sensitive to the natural setting and history. The architects will try to incorporate local park elements such as native plant materials and natural rock, where possible.

The architects and project manager are working with various municipal and provincial authorities to obtain the permits required prior to construction.

#### PARK RESTORATION

Prior to the establishment of the park, the area was used for agricultural and ranching purposes. Horses and cattle extensively grazed portions of the area, contributing to the introduction of non-native plant species and soil disturbance in some areas. In addition, a 138 kV powerline and a ranch road network have impacted the site.

The City of Calgary has developed a restoration program with the ultimate goal of re-establishing diverse native plant communities comprised of grass, wildflower, and shrub species. A priority is to manage the smooth brome, an aggressive, non-native, agricultural grass that is out-competing native vegetation, particularly underneath the power lines, but spreading into the forest.

Beginning in 2004, Parks will initiate a brome management program. Activities will include mowing and selective pesticide applications. Up-to-date treatment location information will be posted at the main parking entrance of Griffith Woods and signage will be posted at the specific sites where the activities are occurring.

### A SPECIAL PARK. A SPECIAL PLACE.

Griffith Woods Natural Environment Park is remarkable for its large size (93 hectares) and spectacular setting. It is a highly valued natural asset and wonderful addition to Calgary's park system.

The area has been created by the erosion and deposition of major river actions. The vegetation communities within the area are representative of non-dammed floodway and flood plain. These include forest, meadow, and wetland communities.

This land and its diverse natural vegetation provide extensive habitat for a wide variety of wildlife. Deer, coyotes, weasels, hares, and muskrat frequently visit the area as well as the occasional moose, bear, lynx, skunk, fox, and cougar. Over 70 species of birds can also be expected to visit.

Griffith Woods is one of Calgary's three "special protection" natural environment parks along with the Inglewood Bird Sanctuary and Weaselhead. Special Protection Natural Environment Parks are of the highest significance to wildlife within Calgary.

## PARK IMPROVEMENT PROJECTS (CONT'D)

### MORE FRAGILE THAN IT LOOKS

- This site has loess soils (wind-delivered, high calcium soils) where compaction happens easily and is difficult to reverse.
- The park is home to an understory of orchids and mosses, both susceptible to trampling and disturbance.
- The combination of soils, plants, and canopy white spruce has created a provincially significant forest.
- The Elbow River, intermittent streams and springs, old ranch roads, along with beaver activity, have created unusual oxbows and perched water tables.
- The park is within the Elbow River floodway. A healthy natural environment will make the area more resilient to flood damage as well as keep our river and groundwater clean.

### A PRIVILEGE. A RESPONSIBILITY.

The users of Griffith Woods have a privilege and a responsibility. They play a critical role in maintaining park health and beauty for the appreciation and enjoyment of others as well as park protection for the benefit of future generations.

Due to the fragile nature of many areas in the park, The City of Calgary requests all park users to:

- Stay on the designated trail and pathway network, or in designated areas.
- Keep dogs on leash. The fine for dogs off-leash is \$250 and will be strictly enforced.
- Pick up after your dog. The fine for failing to do so is \$250 and will be strictly enforced.
- Leave no trace. Please do not disturb wildlife, pick vegetation or leave garbage behind.

### NATURAL AREAS ADOPT-A-PARK PROGRAM

The Natural Areas Adopt-A-Park program gives individuals interested in volunteering the opportunity to work collaboratively with The City of Calgary Parks to enhance Griffith Woods. The program strives to educate volunteers and park users about appropriate park use, create two-way communication between Parks staff and the public, as well as supply resources needed by volunteers for various roles and responsibilities. For further details, please call 221-4668 or email [naturalaap@calgary.ca](mailto:naturalaap@calgary.ca)

## GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The Griffith Woods Management Plan, approved by City Council in 2002, provides sound management direction for this natural environment park. It recommends compatible visitor uses and management strategies to realize and respect park objectives which include:

- To maintain the environment in its natural state, with an emphasis on maintaining and enhancing the biological diversity of the site.
- To protect areas of high quality environmental significance, and to rehabilitate/restore areas that have been previously degraded or disturbed.
- To preserve the integrity of the site as a whole, avoiding fragmentation to the greatest extent possible.
- To ensure public access (at the appropriate sensitive level) to the Elbow River and riverine area.
- To provide for passive, appropriate low-intensity human use.
- To give precedence to the protection of wildlife (both flora and fauna) and the natural resource over human use where the two come into conflict.



ABOVE: Sparrow's-egg Lady's-slipper  
(*Cypripedium passerinum*)  
ON THE COVER: Northern Green Bog Orchid  
(*Platanthera hyperborea*)

## For More Information

Natural Environment Park Management Office	3-1-1
Natural Areas Adopt-A-Park	3-1-1
By-law Enforcement	3-1-1
Fish & Wildlife	297-6423

### ONLINE

[www.calgary.ca/parks](http://www.calgary.ca/parks)

*Funding for Griffith Woods restoration program and washroom facilities provided through the Infrastructure Canada-Alberta Program (ICAP).*

