DRAFT

TRAILS STRATEGY
FOR British Columbia

BRITISH COLUMBIA
The Best Place on Earth

Province of British Columbia

In partnership with

Ministry of Tourism, Culture and the Arts – Recreation Sites and Trails BC

Ministry of Environment – BC Parks

Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure

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WHY AIM FOR A WORLD CLASS TRAIL SYSTEM?

There is increasing recognition that a world class system of trails represents significant opportunities and benefits for British Columbians. Trails are integral to the landscape and enable meaningful connections between individuals and nature. And they represent an untapped bounty that many are only now beginning to appreciate.

Trails provide opportunities for outdoor activities that contribute to physical and mental health. They allow people to connect with one another and with nature in a sustainable manner. They offer significant tourism benefits and opportunities for economic diversification for communities of all sizes. Trails are integral to the provincial strategy to encourage healthy, active lifestyles, whether as recreation amenities or as components of comprehensive transportation and commuting corridors. Transportation and commuting trails help reduce greenhouse gas emissions and thereby contribute to government's Climate Action Program. And, of course, recreation trails provide an opportunity to learn about our rich heritage including, for example, First Nations history and culture.

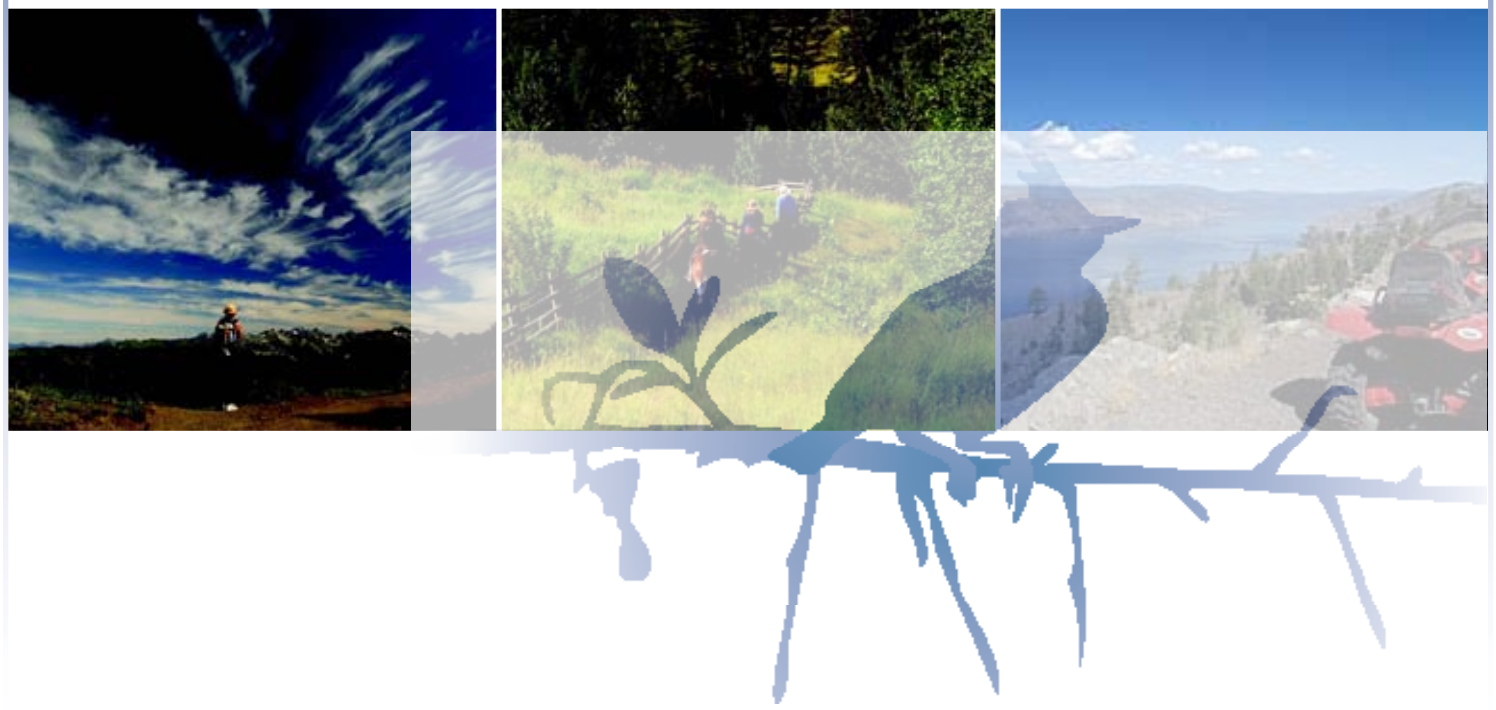
For these and other reasons, British Columbians are recognizing the importance of having an integrated and sustainable trails system to maximize the array of benefits available. The ***Trails Strategy*** for British Columbia is a call to action that invites all British Columbians to join in supporting and developing a sustainable network of trails.

Development and implementation of this Strategy is linked to several provincial initiatives, including B.C.'s:

- New Relationship with First Nations and the Aboriginal Cultural Tourism Blueprint Strategy for British Columbia;
- Tourism 2020 Strategy;
- 2010 Winter Olympics to leverage the international attention on tourism;
- Climate Action Program to reduce greenhouse gas emissions;
- Programs that promote health and fitness, such as ActNow, B.C. Healthy Communities and BikeBC; and the
- Mountain Pine Beetle Action Plan with the goal to diversify local economies and grow tourism.

The Trails Strategy provides the framework, principles, and guidance necessary to develop a world class trails system for B.C. Overall, this framework establishes clear strategic direction for planning, developing, maintaining, managing, marketing and using an integrated network of trails in our province over the next ten years.

THE PARTNERSHIP SPIRIT FOR DEVELOPING B.C.'s *TRAILS STRATEGY*



This Trails Strategy is intended to serve as the hub of a wheel connecting the broad range of organizations and initiatives that have historically worked independently, drawing them together in a shared vision to effectively and consistently develop and manage a world class BC trails network.

This ***Trails Strategy*** for British Columbia was developed in a spirit of partnership. The collaboration by three provincial agencies including the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and the Arts, Ministry of Environment-B.C. Parks and the Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure has been further supported by many other agencies including Ministry of Forests and Range and the Ministry of Agriculture and Lands. The Strategy has been developed in multiple phases incorporating public, stakeholder, government and First Nations' input at every stage.

The first phase involved preparation of a Background Report and included a comprehensive survey of trail stakeholders and interests throughout the Province. Results of this survey were integral in determining the direction for the development of the Strategy.

The second phase involved the preparation of a draft ***Trails Strategy*** by members of the ***Trails Strategy*** Committee (see Acknowledgements at back), representing the public, user groups and various levels of government. Extensive information sessions were held across the province to encourage feedback on the draft ***Trails Strategy***.

This ***Trails Strategy*** document was then revised, in consideration of the useful feedback received, and with the continued support of the ***Trails Strategy*** Committee.

With the completion and approval of the ***Trails Strategy***, the third phase of the project involves implementation over an expected 5 -10-year timeframe. Addressing the actions in the ***Trails Strategy*** constitute the 'B.C. Trails Program' which will be delivered with the support of all levels of government and communities consistent with existing and relevant future legislation. The Strategy will also be implemented in accordance with government's New Relationship with First Nations.

Finally, implementation of the ***Trails Strategy*** will be monitored with the intent to review the Strategy every two years and improve it, as required, based on ongoing feedback and experience.

The ***Trails Strategy*** was developed with a focus on land (terrestrial) trails, but

with recognition that many aspects of this Strategy are also applicable to water-based trails including marine trails. The ***Trails Strategy*** will be implemented in coordination with work underway that addresses marine trails.

The extensive set of material used in developing this ***Trails Strategy*** is available on a supporting website. For more information, please visit www.sitesandtrailsbc.ca/about/provincial-trail-strategy.aspx

OVERVIEW OF B.C.'s *TRAILS STRATEGY*

VISION

A world-renowned, sustainable network of trails, with opportunities for all, which provides benefits for trails users, communities and the province.

KEY COMPONENTS

These are the fundamental components of a sustainable trail program in BC and are prerequisite to achieving the Vision. Specific actions are indicated for each component.

Environmental Stewardship	Collaborative Planning	Good Governance
1. Integrate a framework of environmental considerations, actions and standards into planning, construction and management of the provincial trail network. 2. Enhance environmental awareness and appreciation through education and interpretation.	3. Collaboratively develop local, regional and provincial trail system plans that secure opportunities for all trail users in balance with environmental, cultural and social values. 4 Engage First Nations in collaborative trail planning. 5. Engage landowners, tenured resource users and other stakeholders in collaborative trail planning. 6. Integrate trail planning with the transportation network system. 7. Use legislative tools to approve trails, and identify trail uses, in support of a comprehensive trail network.	8. Develop a communication and education strategy to inform trail users, land owners and managers about the existing governance framework. 9. Improve legislation, regulations and policy to manage motorized use and enhance opportunities for motorized trail users. 10. Enhance recreation opportunities by reducing liability risk to land owners and groups responsible for managing trails.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR A WORLD CLASS SYSTEM OF TRAILS

- Sound Environmental Stewardship and Management
- Respect and Recognition for First Nations' Interests
- Mutual Respect amongst Trail interests, Other Resource Users and Existing Tenure Holders.
- Respect and Understanding among Diverse Trail Interests
- Partnerships and Collaboration
- Secure Recreation Opportunities for All Trail Users
- Benefits for Individuals, Communities and the Province

Sustainable Funding	Effective Management	Strategic Information and Marketing
11. Establish a reliable and diverse funding model to support B.C.'s trail system. 12. Provide a clear and up-to-date catalogue of various funding sources that can support trails.	13. Consolidate existing trail standards, guidelines and best practices, and ensure they are communicated and accessible for agency staff and user groups. 14. Develop and implement educational programs that foster responsible trail practices and voluntary compliance. 15. Integrate the B.C. Trail Program with inter-agency compliance and enforcement services. 16. Integrate consideration of recreation trail use into resource road decisions. 17. Develop a 'best practices' approach to the stewardship of trails on, or adjacent to, agricultural and private lands.	18. Develop and maintain an inventory of trails. 19. Undertake a comprehensive survey of trail users. 20. Support the marketing of trails where there is community and trail user group support.

IMPLEMENTATION

21. Establish a provincial trail advisory body to provide advice on the implementation of the ***Trails Strategy*** and the B.C. Trail Program.
22. Support existing local and regional trail committees or groups, and where not present encourage their establishment, so that they can assist implementation and continuous improvement of the ***Trails Strategy***.
23. Develop an implementation plan that identifies specific timelines and responsibilities for implementing the Strategy.

VISION

The Vision for B.C.'s trails system is:

A world-renowned, sustainable network of trails, with opportunities for all, which provides benefits for trails users, communities and the province.

A world-renowned network

British Columbia has an immense and diverse landscape with thousands of kilometres of trails built, maintained and valued by individuals and communities throughout the province. Trails can be locally cherished, popular in a particular region or sought out by international travellers; but when locals or visitors think about some of the best trails in the world, British Columbia should come to mind.

A sustainable trail network

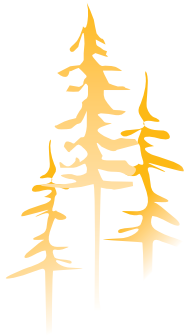
A sustainable network of trails balances environmental, social and economic values. By doing this, it will be viable over the long term and there is an expectation that the trails and experiences will be available for generations to come.

Opportunities for all

Trails in British Columbia are enjoyed by a diverse range of users with a diverse set of recreation values. A world-renowned, sustainable network must provide value-based opportunities for these different users groups that fosters respect between the users and for the environment. Recognition that trail users are entitled to an experience that fulfills their goals - whether it is for a wilderness non-motorized experience or a long distance motorized trail ride- and acknowledgment that the vast land base can be shared is paramount to resolving pervasive trail use conflict. It can be said that there must be "opportunities for all trail users within the system, but not that every trail will be available or appropriate for every user'.

Benefits for trail users, communities and the province

To ensure the network of trails in British Columbia is supported by all members of a community, stakeholders and levels of government, the benefits must be apparent, and recognized by all, not just the trail users themselves.



Defining a Recreation Trail

In keeping with the diverse multifunctional role of recreation trails in B.C., including transportation, tourism and leisure, this Vision is based on an inclusive definition for 'recreation trails:'

A recreation trail is a path or route solely or partly used for one or more recreation functions.

This definition is intended to embrace the broad range of trails that may be used primarily for recreation but also function as transportation/commuting corridors and as tourism and economic assets. For example, a trail may also include a road, rail bed or sidewalk while recognizing that not every road, rail bed or sidewalk is necessarily a recreation trail. Such an inclusive approach is consistent with developing and maintaining an integrated network of trails across the province to achieve the strategic Vision.

BENEFITS OF A SUSTAINABLE SYSTEM OF TRAILS

This ***Trails Strategy*** represents a fundamental step toward formally recognizing and valuing B.C.'s trails system for the significant benefits it provides trail users, communities and the province.

A desired outcome of this Strategy is to mobilize citizens and communities in becoming stewards and users of recreation trails, and to inspire entrepreneurs to develop responsible tourism and trails-related products and businesses.

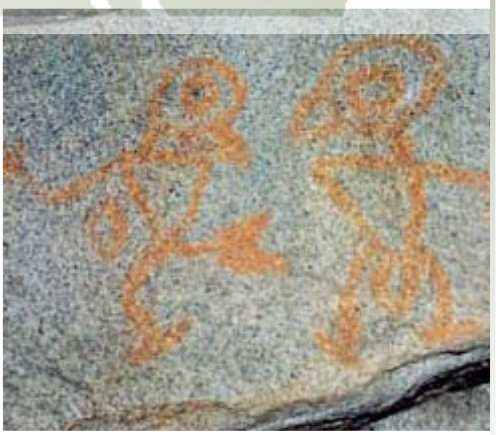
Implementation of this ***Trails Strategy*** will contribute strongly to widely-shared goals of employment, sustainability, health, education, social support, and respect for the environment and our cultural heritage. For example, the importance of tourism to the provincial economy is steadily increasing. Many communities view recreation amenities, such as trails, as exciting and sustainable means of attracting tourists and diversifying local economies. Communities that once relied on the forest industry are now turning to tourism to enhance long term economic and community development opportunities.

Achieving all of these benefits will take time. Therefore, the Strategy is based on both short term and long term implementation objectives. The short term actions are anticipated to be within the current policy and funding framework and focus on coordination of activities and efforts. The long term actions address recommended improvements to the current legislation, policy and funding framework. In all cases, establishing and maintaining collaborative and effective partnerships will be key to achieving successful outcomes.

Key benefits of recreation trails include:

- Community and social – cohesive communities, enhanced quality of life, providing opportunities for families and friends to enjoy time together.
- Economic – increased tourism revenues, greater business investment and enhanced property values.
- Educational – providing an outdoor classroom for nature, culture and history.
- Environment – enhanced environmental awareness, improved understanding of our natural heritage, and stewardship of the environment.
- Health and fitness – improved health and physical well-being for both individuals and communities, reduced health care costs, and enhanced productivity.
- Heritage and cultural – recognition and respect for First Nations culture and historical values.
- Transportation – greener transportation and commuting use of trails contributing to reduced greenhouse gas omissions and improved health and wellness of individuals.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES



These Guiding Principles are fundamental commitments that guide implementation of the ***Trails Strategy*** and are the foundation on which the B.C. Trails Program will be built.

Sound Environmental Stewardship and Management: the trail network must be based on environmental sustainability and respect for environmental values. Maintaining integrity of the environment is fundamental to all aspects of trail planning and management. Trails and trail use will only occur where these values are respected and protected.

Respect and Recognition for First Nations' Interests: the Strategy will be implemented consistent with the Province's New Relationship with First Nations. This includes strengthening relationships on a government-to-government basis, decision making in accordance with the New Relationship and working in collaboration with First Nations based on respect and recognition.

Mutual respect amongst trail interests other resource users and existing tenure holders: the trail system must be designed in an integrated manner so that it is respectful of the rights, and responsive to the concerns of existing tenure holders including, for example, forest and woodlot licensees, range agreement holders, mining tenure holders, tourism operators, and trappers. Similarly, holders of resource rights often do not have exclusive rights to the land base and therefore must recognize the value of trails and work collaboratively and respectfully with trail interests to integrate trails with other uses on the land base.

Respect and Understanding among Diverse Trail Interests: the Strategy recognizes that a diversity of opportunities needs to be provided given the wide variety of interests in trails. For this to work effectively, it is important that trail users and groups involved in trail building and use respect one another in a manner that recognizes their mutual interest in, and commitment to, this Strategy.

Partnerships and Collaboration: a sustainable trails system can only be achieved through extensive partnerships and collaboration between First Nations, diverse trail user groups, other resource users, and all levels of government - municipal, regional, provincial and federal. This ***Trails Strategy*** was built through the collaborative efforts of the ***Trails Strategy*** Committee (see Acknowledgements

at back) and further collaboration during its public review. The most effective way to implement the ***Trails Strategy*** will be to maintain a partnership spirit.

Secure Recreation Opportunities for All Trail Users: the trails system must provide recreation opportunities for all trail users within established environmental guidelines. The system must be responsive to gaps where opportunities need to be more adequately provided. Securing opportunities for all users through planning and management is fundamental to a robust and diverse trails system.

Benefits for Individuals, Communities and the Province: the trail network must provide the full range of benefits for trail users, local communities and the province to garner the widespread support necessary to attain the Vision. A diversity of trails for a variety of users will help deliver the considerable benefits associated with trails to all British Columbians.

CURRENT STATUS

How Many Kilometres of Trail Are There in B.C.?

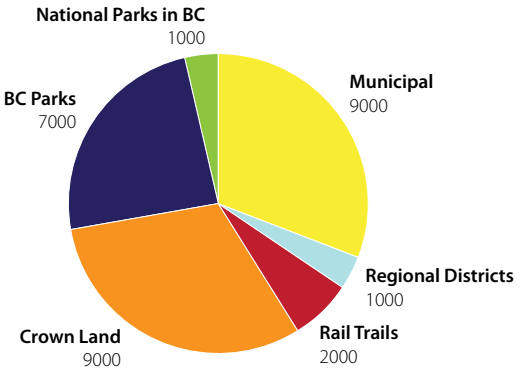
As a result of the dedication and hard-work of British Columbians over many decades, the province is fortunate to have an extensive range of recreation trails today. Best estimates put the recognized trails network at about 30,000 kilometres. However, many recreation trails are not authorized and currently there is no consistent record available to track these trails. Estimates of the actual kilometres of trails existing and used in British Columbia could easily be in the hundreds of thousands. What is known is that the demand for recreation trails is growing from a multitude of user groups as more residents pursue a healthy lifestyle involving outdoor recreation, and as tourists increasingly recognize B.C. for its natural assets.

Trails on public lands include those under the authority of various government agencies. These include:

- municipal trails (9000 km);
- regional district trails (1000 km);
- rail trails (2000 km) managed by various agencies;
- recreation trails (9000 km) managed by the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and the Arts;
- provincial park trails (7000 km) managed by BC Parks; and
- national park trails (1000 km) managed by Parks Canada.

In addition, there are thousands of kilometres of resource roads that are used as trails (particularly by motorized users) or provide key access to trails for a variety of trail users. There are also a large number of trails on private land.

Kilometers of Managed Trails in BC



Rail Trails, Spirit of 2010 Trails, and Trans Canada Trail

British Columbia is rich in abandoned railway corridors. Over the past 15 years, the province has been acquiring abandoned corridors for conversion to a world class recreation trail experience. The Spirit of 2010 Trail is a network of five abandoned rail corridors stretching across southern British Columbia and Vancouver Island, linking 18 communities: the Kettle Valley Rail Trail, Slocan Rail Trail, Columbia and Western Rail Trail, Cowichan Rail Trail and the Great Northern Rail Trail. These trails provide world class opportunities for hiking, walking, cycling, horseback riding, cross country skiing and, where approved by local communities, snowmobiling.

British Columbias's portion of the Trans Canada Trail (TCT) extends from the southern tip of Vancouver Island to the B.C./Alberta border. The 2000 kilometre long B.C. portion of the TCT includes four of the Spirit of 2010 Trails as well as community and regional trails, B.C. Parks trails, community pathways and forest roads. The TCT represents a collaborative effort between the regional, provincial and federal governments, the Trans Canada Trail Foundation, community group support, and the Trails Society of British Columbia (Trails B.C.).

First Nations and Heritage Trails

First Nations have used trails for travel and acquiring sustenance since the beginning of time. Early European explorers and settlers to British Columbia relied on these already established trails and added to their unique histories. Nine heritage trails, totalling over 500 km, have been designated in B.C. under the Heritage Conservation Act including the well-known 350 km Nuxalk-Carrier Grease/Alexander Mackenzie Heritage Trail between Quesnel and Bella Coola. In addition, some First Nations are actively involved in protecting trails, and in managing and promoting responsible trail use that respects cultural values.

Provincial and Regional Trails

Provincial and regional trails form the backbone for the provincial trail system. Examples of existing or proposed provincial and regional trails include the Juan

de Fuca Trail, Berg Lake Trail (Mount Robson Provincial Park), National Hiking Trail (B.C. Section), Telegraph Trail, the Central Valley Greenway, the Sea to Sky Trail, B.C. Marine Trails Network and numerous other regional trail networks developed or being developed. Many trail advocate groups are actively working to initiate or complete important regional trail projects. There are significant opportunities to expand provincial and regional trails and connect communities as part of this Strategy. These provincial and regional trail examples, through implementation of this Strategy, may well become future world renowned trails such as the iconic West Coast Trail (Pacific Rim National Park Reserve) that is managed by Parks Canada at the federal level.

Note that 'regional trails' is used here to mean those trails of regional significance that can be managed by one or more agencies. These are distinct from the 'regional district trails' mentioned earlier which refers to those trails managed by regional districts.

TRENDS INFLUENCING TRAIL USAGE

Trail usage is as varied as the number and types of trails available. Most trails are used for walking, hiking and cycling – which are by far North America's most popular recreation activities – with opportunities also provided for horseback riding, snowmobiling, off road vehicle use, and other uses.

A comprehensive set of forces affecting recreation trails has been assessed for this Strategy. The following five trends are considered especially significant in planning and developing a world class recreation trail system for B.C.

Increasing Interest in the Benefits of Active Outdoor Lifestyles

There is growing recognition of the importance of trails in contributing to active lifestyles that improve the physical, mental and spiritual well-being of all ages, particularly our youth.

Active lifestyles can translate into more productive individuals and communities, and lower health care costs. Increasing outdoor awareness and appreciation can also foster an ethic of caring for our environment. New and improving technologies enable those with physical challenges to participate in a broadening range of trail activities and to increase their enjoyment of the outdoors. Communities that encourage physical activity by making use of linear corridors are registering a significant positive influence on public health and wellness.

Changing Demographics

Demand is growing for recreation trails close to urban and residential areas and this, in turn, is helping to invigorate individual and community health.

More people are using trails as a form of physical activity – this trend can be seen especially in the 55+ age group. Trail use in B.C. is growing strongly amongst both baby boomers and their children who value a healthy lifestyle and urban dwellers who view recreation trails as an alternate means of transportation. Both groups are demanding more trails for low impact use. Consequently there is growing demand for more recreation trails near urban centres and increased day-use opportunities. Demand is also increasing for long-distance trails.

Increasing Diversity of Users

There is growing recognition of the increasing diversity of users and the need to reflect diverse values in trail planning and management.

One of the factors contributing to the increase in demand for trails is the growing number of activities occurring on trails. Activities such as mountain biking, cycling for recreation and transportation, horseback riding, walking and hiking have increased in volume and popularity.

Another example is increasing trail use by motorized recreationists due in part to the rapid changes in technology for snowmobiles, all-terrain vehicles (ATVs) and off-road motorcycles. Increased motorized trail use can change trail use patterns. Competing demands for trails and recreation opportunities often reflect different values and can lead to friction between user groups.

These factors, along with increasing concerns for the environment, are compelling governments to take a more integrated approach to recreation and transportation and to classify trails according to the desired experience. The increasing diversity of users underscores the growing importance of collaborative partnerships between public, private, community and volunteer groups for successful coordination of trail networks.

Increasing Recognition of Economic Benefits

Recreation trails are becoming recognized as drivers of economic development and tourism.

The links between traditional tourism and outdoor recreation are getting stronger. Communities throughout the province are recognizing the opportunities associated with recreation trail users as a source of much needed tourism revenues and drivers of economic development for rural communities and urban centres alike. Trails have the advantage of boosting economic activity while contributing positive impacts to community, social development, education of citizens, and the environment. It is also becoming apparent that economic benefits can be compounded if trails are designed and managed as a network of interlinked connections between communities and a range of attractions.

Increasing Transportation Role for Trails

Trails are playing a greater transportation role as greener alternatives become increasingly popular.

Trails provide alternative modes of transportation that are sustainable, economical, healthy and environmentally friendly. Climate change is one of the most pressing issues facing modern society and trails represent opportunities to cut greenhouse gases and facilitate commuting and travel to local services. Communities throughout the province are seeking ways of integrating all modes of transportation, such as improved linkages between road systems and commuter bike routes.

The key trends all suggest increasing demand for community based, highly connected and locally developed trail networks that provide linkages among communities and regions, as well as nearby parks and natural areas.

KEY ISSUES

A number of key issues were identified in the Background Report (based on a trail user survey) and also raised in the feedback received on the draft Strategy. Key issues include:

- **Access**: such as limitations due to private land, deteriorating resource roads, and restrictions on motorized/ mechanized use;
- **Funding**: inconsistent and insufficient to develop and maintain trails on a sustainable basis;
- **Insurance/liability**: such as insurance costs and liability exposure;
- **Environment**: impacts on soil, water, wildlife and other values caused by trail use;
- **Expertise**: such as a need to attract and maintain skilled volunteers;
- **Legislation**: such as a need for improvements related to management of off-road vehicle trail use;
- **Trails information**: such as a need for maps, brochures and websites;
- **Signage**: such as educational signs that promote safe and responsible use;
- **Trail use**: increasing use of trails resulting in the need for improved trail construction and maintenance;
- **Compliance and enforcement**: such as a need for adequate compliance and enforcement services and enforceable rules; and
- **Conflict between trail users**: given the disproportionate nature of impacts between different types of users, it is particularly important to resolve conflicts so that all trail users can enjoy a high quality trail experience for their particular type of use.

This Strategy strives to address these issues by building and sustaining each of the Key Components through implementation of the respective actions. Other important issues including multi-use v.s. single use trails; private land concerns; trail standards; and competing resource users, are also addressed by various Strategy actions.

KEY COMPONENTS

These Key Components have been identified as the fundamental requirements of a sustainable trail program for British Columbia. They are vital for achieving the Vision. The actions being proposed in this Strategy are intended to establish and sustain these Key Components.

Environmental Stewardship: This refers to actions undertaken to ensure that trails are constructed, managed and maintained in a manner that appropriately manages impacts on the environment, and that activities designed to enhance environmental awareness by trail users through tools such as education and interpretation are undertaken.

Collaborative Planning: This is the process whereby high quality recreation opportunities for all trail users are secured through collaborative planning and engagement with First Nations, other resource users, government agencies at all levels, and trail user groups. The process must be careful to address appropriate linkages between Crown and private lands, and integration with the transportation network system. Through collaborative planning a trail network can be established that is supported by the broader community and is responsive to needs of all interests.

Good Governance: This includes the range of activities related to communicating and improving the legislation, regulatory and policy framework that supports the B.C. Trails Program. These efforts will help deliver a governance model that is robust and responsive in developing a sustainable trail system.

Sustainable Funding: Refers to efforts made to utilize existing funds for trail projects as well as efforts to secure consistent funding to establish and sustain a trails system over the long term. Funding provides the "seed" support needed to attract volunteers and to develop partnership projects.

Effective Management: These are the numerous and varied activities undertaken by governments, First Nations, trails groups, resource tenure holders and land owners, needed to support and maintain the trail system. They include consolidation and communication of support documents (e.g. guidelines), development of educational programs that foster responsible trail practices, integrated compliance and enforcement services, consideration of trail use

when resource road decisions are made, and a 'best practices' approach to the stewardship of trails on agricultural and private land.

Strategic Information and Marketing: This includes gathering the fundamental data needed to design, develop and maintain a sustainable trail system; and targeted marketing of specific trails where there is community and trail user support.

ACTIONS FOR KEY COMPONENTS

Actions are identified for each Key Component to support the process of working towards the ***Trails Strategy*** Vision.

Environmental Stewardship

Action #1: Integrate a framework of environmental considerations, actions and standards into planning, construction and management of the provincial trail network.

A fundamental aspect of a sustainable trail system is environmental stewardship where trails are constructed and maintained to avoid, minimize and/or mitigate adverse impacts to:

- sensitive ecosystems and species at risk;
- soils;
- water quality, including drinking water and community watersheds;
- wildlife and wildlife habitat; and
- native vegetation by controlling the spread of invasive plants.

Sensitive ecosystems are generally defined as those which are fragile and/or rare, or those ecosystems that are ecologically important because of the diversity of species they support, including wetlands, riparian areas, natural meadows and grasslands. Minimizing the extent of disturbance when developing trails helps reduce impacts on soil, habitat, rangelands, and can help reduce the spread of invasive plants.

It is important that trail user groups be aware of expectations regarding the appropriate management of potential environmental impacts so that they can effectively and efficiently address these requirements when seeking approval to either construct or maintain a trail.

Action #2: Enhance environmental awareness and appreciation through education and interpretation.

Many quality educational programs have been developed by various provincial, national and international recreation and trail organizations that promote respect for the environment and identify low impact practices, for example programs such as 'tread lightly' and 'leave no trace'. These programs, along with peer pressure, can

help prevent damaging behaviour to the environment.

Educational programs might focus on topics such as habitat requirements of species at risk, limiting the spread of invasive species, minimizing soil erosion to protect water quality and respect for fragile alpine environments.

Trail use itself connects people to the outdoors and provides interpretive 'classroom' opportunities that help raise public awareness and respect for the environment. Partnership efforts between trail user groups, government, First Nations and other interests can help ensure these opportunities are effectively realized.

Collaborative Planning

Action #3: Collaboratively develop local, regional and provincial trail system plans that secure opportunities for all trail users in balance with environmental, cultural and social values.

There is a tremendous range of natural and cultural diversity in B.C. and this is reflected in the variety of trails and trail users across the province. One of the best ways to encourage and secure access to trails for all users is the development of local trail system plans through a collaborative approach, where such plans do not exist. This is the key action to help resolve trail use conflicts (e.g. between motorized and non-motorized users), resource use conflict, and to provide high quality trail experience opportunities for all users.

Collaborative partnerships between trail user groups, governments and First Nations help ensure strong support and buy-in. And a collaborative planning process ensures that the interests and desires of motorized and non-motorized trail users as well as existing tenure holders are accommodated in a manner that promotes mutual respect and cooperation. In these processes it will be important to strategically integrate urban and rural settings with regard to recreation opportunities, transportation needs and protection of open space.

In addition to securing recreational opportunities for all users, several additional opportunities accrue from collaborative trail planning such as:

- reducing impacts on the environment, water quality and wildlife;
- fostering compatibility with other resource uses;
- providing the strategic context to help expedite trail approval decisions;
- reducing conflicts by classifying trails according to the most appropriate uses; and
- prioritizing trail projects to make the best use of limited resources.

Trail system plans may be part of recreation access planning, urban transportation and greenway planning or other planning processes. The plans would:

- build on the guidance provided by existing strategic and operational plans (such as Land and Resource Management Plans, Regional Growth Strategies, Community and Regional Trail Plans, B.C. Park Management Plans);
- focus on recreation opportunities while integrating diverse and newly emerging trail interests with other resources users; and
- be designed to not adversely impact other users of Crown land resources such as forestry, mining, ranching and trapping.

The process of developing trail system plans can greatly facilitate community involvement and action by clarifying a range of essential topics, including:

- desired future conditions for a variety of trail users;
- information about existing trails and user opportunities;
- any gaps between existing and desired conditions;
- management actions needed to best achieve desired conditions; and
- implementation and monitoring needed to effectively attain desired conditions over time.

Several structured and proven recreation planning approaches, such as the Limits of Acceptable Change (LAC) process, can be used to undertake collaborative trail planning. Whatever approach is chosen, it is important to have a clearly defined dispute resolution process; given the time invested by user groups in collaborative planning, the process needs to result in clear, timely and fair decisions.

Implementing this action will require a comprehensive review of local and regional trail planning processes, researching the best collaborative practices

available, and then applying the learning to ongoing planning processes. It will be helpful to identify a provincial 'champion' to provide leadership and support for trail planning.

Action #4: Engage First Nations in collaborative trail planning.

Trails throughout British Columbia are located on the traditional territories of First Nations. In addition to concerns about impacts to asserted rights and title, First Nations may have interests in trails and trail use from a variety of perspectives including:

- potential tourism opportunities and economic benefits for First Nations;
- educational and interpretive opportunities with trails related to First Nations traditional use and ecology, either provided by First Nations or in a partnership with First Nations;
- concerns that some trails could open areas of First Nations cultural and spiritual significance to outside trail users; and
- concerns about the potential impacts to the environmental and First Nations cultural heritage by trail users.

Successful trail planning must engage First Nation communities on a 'government to government basis' at the earliest stages. This will result in a locally appropriate approach to specific First Nations interests and concerns and ensure an approach consistent with the 'New Relationship' based on mutual respect and recognition.

In addition to the 'government-to-government' relationship, it is also important that trail interest groups develop relationships locally with First Nations. Trail interest groups must strive to collaborate and share information about trail projects and initiatives with First Nations communities,.

Action #5: Engage landowners, tenured resource users and other stakeholders in collaborative trail planning.

To be successful, all potentially interested parties need to be involved directly or indirectly in collaborative trail planning. Direct involvement can include being on the planning team that helps develop a draft plan. Indirect involvement can include being approached proactively to provide information and concerns that need to be addressed in the draft plan and/or being asked to review a draft plan

to help ensure key interests are considered.

Depending on the nature and location of trail planning, in addition to First Nations engagement as noted in Action #4 above, interested parties can include:

- private landowners and agricultural owners/operators on the agricultural land reserve (ALR);
- Aboriginal Communities including Metis and First Nations
- government agencies such as Ministry of Tourism, Culture and the Arts; Ministry of Environment; Ministry of Agriculture and Land; Integrated Land Management Bureau; Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure; and the provincial Health Authorities;
- local government such as regional districts and municipalities;
- tenured resource users such as forest licensees, woodlot operators, ranchers, miners, trappers, adventure tourism operators and other tenured Land Act users;
- a variety of trail users such as hikers, horseback riders, cyclists and mountain bikers; all terrain vehicle (ATV), off-road motorcycle and snowmobile riders; and other trail interests such as cross-country skiing, and dog-sled mushing. Interactions with marine trails and canoeing/kayaking also need to be considered.

Addressing all key interests in collaborative planning helps ensure the full range of benefits from trails are realized while also addressing concerns so that, for example, the rights held by tenured resource users are not unduly impacted.

Action #6: Integrate trail planning with the transportation network system.

As noted in Action #5 above, it is important to involve key agencies such as the Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure (TRANS) in trail planning where that planning involves the transportation network system, including public roads. It is also important that the 'results' of collaborative trail planning be conveyed to those charged with transportation responsibilities such as TRANS as soon as possible. That will then enable TRANS and other organizations with authorities regarding the transportation network system provincially, regionally and locally to consider and accommodate, where possible, the recommendations in the trail plan when making subsequent transportation decisions.

Trail interests that involve the transportation network system can include:

- using public roads for particular trail use activities like cycling and/or designing safe cycling routes when constructing highways;
- using transportation right-of-ways or corridors for particular trail use activities;
- crossing of public roads by motorized trail users;
- maintaining existing trail links as part of road right-of-way dedication when subdivisions are developed (versus use of 5% dedication for parks);
- zoning authority decisions in unincorporated areas; and
- other related trail interests such as parking and access to trail heads.

Some of the interests can be accommodated within existing legislation and policy whereas other interests may trigger the need to examine changes to legislation and policy.

Action #7: Use legislative tools to approve trails, and identify trail uses, in support of a comprehensive trail network.

Most of the approximately 30,000 km of existing trails identified by land management agencies have been approved by government, but tens or hundreds of thousands of additional kilometres of trail have not been approved. In addition, there is ongoing demand to construct new trails. Timely approval of projects is an important consideration for local communities, and needs to be consistent with approved trail system plans and legislation. Trails that are approved must be reasonably safe, environmentally sound, and not significantly impact other resource values or uses.

Having approved trails provides several advantages and opportunities:

- liability insurance can often be provided to trail stewardship groups who manage approved trails;
- investments made on Crown land are more secure where the interest has been registered;
- enforceable rules can be applied to protect trails and user experiences; and
- they can be marketed to leverage tourism-related economic benefits.

A holistic approach to trail approvals, ideally consistent with approved trail system plans, can help ensure that decisions are made in a timely manner. Such an

approach would be facilitated through partnerships, particularly with First Nations. This enables trail use proponents to take advantage of narrow funding 'windows' and volunteers to complete trail projects.

As part of trail approval, the intended use of the trail should be identified. A trail classification system could be used to facilitate the identification and communication of intended trail use. The identification of intended use helps inform trail users what trails are managed to support their desired use of the trail, and helps direct users away from trails that do not meet their expectations thereby averting or reducing potential trail use conflicts. The intended use of a trail can often be effectively conveyed by communication alone however in some instances the intended use may need to be established using legislation tools such as posting (signing) trail rules. The intended use of a trail can be determined by considering factors such as: What direction does the trail system plan provide? What type of use was the trail originally designed to accommodate? What has been the historical use of the trail? Is the trail construction suitable for any new uses? What user group is responsible for maintaining the trail? What safety and sustainability concerns are raised by various types of trail use?

Good Governance

Action #8: Develop a communication and education strategy to inform trail users, land owners and managers about the existing governance framework.

A variety of agencies in B.C. manage trails using an array of legislative tools. The legislative framework, in general, is fairly comprehensive; it is, however, complex and confusing given the many pieces of legislation, regulation and policy that exist, and the multi-agency roles in trail management. As discussed in Action #3, collaborative planning is an effective way of streamlining application of the governance framework by taking a strategic approach that involves all applicable interests.

Opportunities derived from a clear communication and education strategy about the governance framework include:

- informed trails users, landowners and managers who can see how the

legislative framework relates to their interests;
- more sustainable trail use as users, landowners and managers see how the pieces of legislation, regulation and policy 'fit together'; and
- improved understanding which should lead to greater compliance with legal requirements.

Trail users may not fully realize recent important changes in legislation. For example, in 2007 the Forest and Range Practices Act was amended to make it illegal for individuals to cause environmental damage. It is therefore now illegal for trail use activities to recklessly damage sensitive rangelands and wetlands. Communication and education material can help ensure trail proponents and users are aware of, and comply with, new legal requirements.

There are four key pieces of provincial legislation that have a bearing on trails, administered by different agencies:
- Forest and Range Practices Act: public recreation trails established or authorized by the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and the Arts;
- Land Act: commercial recreation trails tenured by the Ministry of Agriculture and Lands, Integrated Land Management Bureau;
- Park Act: trails in parks and protected areas managed by B.C. Parks; and
- Local Government Act: trails managed by regional districts or municipalities.

Many other pieces of legislation can be used to address trails and trai l use including the Heritage Conservation Act, Wildlife Act, Occupiers Liability Act, and Motor Vehicle (All Terrain) Act. Other acts also relate to trail management, for example, the Weed Control Act addresses the duty to control noxious weeds (invasive plants) and the Drinking Water Protection Act addresses the protection of water used for domestic purposes. Describing how all these pieces of legislation 'fit together' in managing trails is one key to raising public awareness and support for a sustainable network of trails and trail use.

Action #9: Improve legislation, regulations and policy to manage motorized use and enhance opportunities for motorized trail users.

The Motor Vehicle (All Terrain) Act was introduced in the early 1970's. The Act currently applies to snowmobiles but not to all-terrain vehicles or to off-road motorcycles. Since the Act was introduced, there have been major changes to all forms of off-road vehicles (ORVs) and motorized trail use has substantially increased. There are significant opportunities to improve legislation to manage motorized trail use.

Improved legislation can help ensure that:

- the many benefits derived from motorized trail use can be more fully realized, such as tourism-related economic benefits to local communities;
- the impacts of motorized use on the environment and other user values and interests are minimized;
- ORVs are clearly identified through registration and/or licensing;
- conflicts, including those associated with off-trail dispersed use, are resolved before they impact relations with other trail and resource users; and
- public safety concerning use of ORV's is improved.

Several jurisdictions have recently improved legislation related to motorized use, and B.C. has undertaken a variety of inter-jurisdictional and stakeholder reviews to assess how improvements could be made. Thanks to many organizations and groups, B.C. has a robust body of work regarding how ORV-related legislation, regulations and policy could be improved. There is strong and growing support for legislative improvements from organizations representing motorized and non-motorized trail users, environmental organizations, ranchers, and others.

Legislative improvements will keep B.C. competitive with other jurisdictions that provide the framework necessary to facilitate motorized trail use for both residents and non-residents. Once such a framework is available in B.C. a sustainable network of motorized trails can be more effectively developed and impacts reduced.

Action #10: Enhance recreation opportunities by reducing liability risk to landowners and groups responsible for managing trails.

Issues of liability and managing risk are some of the most formidable challenges facing trail managers and trail volunteer groups in any jurisdiction. It is therefore

important to review existing liability issues and explore opportunities for improvement.

Opportunities derived from addressing liability issues include:

- lowering liability risk to government, private landowners, trail stewards and users;
- providing access to insurance that is more attainable and affordable; and
- greater willingness on the part of landowners and trail proponents to be involved in trail projects.

To address this action:

- in the short term, review the Occupiers Liability Act to determine how it can be improved by placing less risk on the landowner and trail groups while placing more responsibility onto the trail user; and
- in the long term, examine the feasibility of introducing new 'inherent risk' legislation (see below).

Some outdoor activities entail higher levels of risk. Several jurisdictions have introduced forms of 'inherent risk' legislation that places more accountability on the individual trail user and helps reduce liability risk to landowners. This approach also lessens the legal exposure of trail stewardship groups thereby increasing their interest in developing and managing trails. Insurance is generally more attainable and affordable to trail stewardship groups and landowners where inherent risk legislation exists.

SUSTAINABLE FUNDING

Action #11: Establish a reliable and diverse funding model to support B.C.'s trail system.

A consistent level of funding for a B.C. Trail Program is needed to help ensure it is developed and maintained so that the multiple benefits derived by British Columbians are sustainable. Several successful funding models exist in other jurisdictions that can be examined in developing an optimum approach for B.C.

The opportunities derived from a consistent level of funding include:

- establishment of base funding in support of a sustainable B.C. Trail Program;

- a provincial trail network that is effectively developed and maintained; and
- greater ability to sustain public/private partnerships and use of volunteers to stretch program funds.

Stable sources that provide "seed" funding can be augmented in several ways including: access to incremental funding sources available from various levels of government (e.g. where matching funds are needed); private donations (e.g. recreation equipment manufacturers); companies that have entered into agreements that give them an interest in trail rights-of-way (fibre optics and conventional transmission lines are two examples); and in-kind contributions from volunteers who support local recreation organizations. Volunteers who are responsible for maintaining trails are expressing frustrations over lack of support and are burning out; reliable 'seed' funding is sorely needed to provide the support necessary to sustain their efforts.

Building on the successful experiences of funding models already in place, B.C. can develop an equally effective means of collecting, managing and dispersing funds. One possibility may include the formation of a trust fund that would provide a mechanism for dedicating incoming revenue to specific trail purposes. A board (likely composed of representatives from trail groups and government) could be authorized to make allocations from the trust fund. One successful model of a trust within B.C. is the Northern Development Initiative Trust.

Action #12: Provide a clear and up-to-date catalogue of various funding sources that can support trails.

A number of organizations and programs provide funding support for trail initiatives but these often vary from year to year. A well-organized and up-to-date catalogue of potential sources would enable trail proponents (including government staff at all levels, First Nations and trail groups) to access much-needed funding. This will improve the ability for trail proponents to understand what funding envelopes exist and how to apply for funding.

The opportunities derived from such a catalogue include:

- improved use of existing funding sources for trail projects;
- more efficient access to appropriate programs by trail proponents; and
- an increase in the number and variety of recreation and tourism opportunities.

The various organizations and programs that can provide funding and in-kind support include:

- provincial and federal government agencies with trail responsibilities;
- provincial and federal programs and funding envelopes that support trails;
- regional and municipal governments; and
- private sector partners such as suppliers of trail construction material and recreation equipment.

This action is intended to provide coordination of information regarding potential funding sources and is not intended to change control over these resources. Information regarding funding sources needs to be regularly updated and made available through the internet. Some of the key factors include the intended use of various funding envelopes, their duration, the criteria necessary to access the funds, deadlines for application, and other pertinent information that can provide assistance to trail proponents seeking funding support.

EFFECTIVE MANAGEMENT

Action #13: Consolidate existing trail standards, guidelines and best practices, and ensure they are widely communicated and accessible for agency staff and user groups.

There are numerous carefully developed documents (e.g. trail standards, guidelines, best practices and related tools) in place to support trail development, management and use, thanks to the collaborative efforts of agencies and trail organizations. Many of these currently accepted documents have not been consolidated, however, and cannot be readily found. Simply put, people will not follow the good advice these documents provide if they can't be found.

The following important outcomes will become more attainable once the existing support documents are made more readily available via easier access:

- safe trail use;

- low impact practices, sustainable design and respect for the environment; and
- respect for other trail users.

Most of the information available in existing documents represents a flexible set of tools that provides advice to trail managers and user groups for their consideration. In some instances, for example to address safe trail use, a required standard may be adopted. The adoption of reasonable safety standards can help prevent accidents and may also serve to protect trail user groups and landowners from legal action should a user be injured where the standard (duty of care) has been followed.

One potential solution is to provide access to the complete list of available documents on a website dedicated to trail use. Resource agencies and trail organizations can collectively ensure that the 'best available' information is posted and updated as required. Each agency and organization can provide links on their respective websites to this consolidated site to help promote easy access.

Most user groups are affiliated with provincial, national or international organizations that have developed and tested successful guidelines and other tools over time. However, in many cases local trail users are not associated with such organizations and may not be aware of the documents. In some cases, the organizations themselves may not list the documents on their respective websites.

Similarly, various organizations have developed a wealth of excellent information designed to minimize impacts on the environment and to promote safe use and respect for other trail users (e.g. 'codes of conduct', 'trail etiquette', 'low impact practices', 'leave no trace', 'pack in, pack out' guidelines). It is important to provide links to the best of these documents so they are easily accessible online.

Action #14: Develop and implement educational programs that foster responsible trail practices and voluntary compliance.

With the intended trail use(s) identified for each approved trail (Action #7) ideally through a process of collaborative trail planning (Action #3), it is important for

government and trail user groups to communicate these intentions through educational programs designed for all trail users so that voluntary compliance can be achieved. Educational efforts can also focus on respect for other trail users and low impact practices aimed to protect environmental values. The presence of members of organized clubs on trails can help exert a positive peer pressure on other users. The collective educational efforts by government and trail user groups in partnership can help ensure that trail practices and use are appropriate and avert the need for more formal and costly compliance and enforcement action.

Action #15: Integrate the BC Trail Program with inter-agency compliance and enforcement services.

However, if education is not enough, several agencies provide compliance and enforcement (C&E) services in support of recreation trail management. It is important that these services be well-integrated with a B.C. Trail Program so they are effectively deployed.

This action will help:

- promote awareness and compliance with desired trail use practices through education; and
- improve awareness about existing C&E services and how they can support trail management.

Government initiated a business shift in the spring of 2008, through which agencies are to integrate cross government priorities and key activities such as compliance and enforcement (C&E). A multi-agency Provincial C&E Coordination Team is developing a provincial strategy for C&E. The strategy will include an overall framework for enhanced resource management coordination, with each agency helping identify coordination opportunities and design solutions. Implementation of the strategy, in the spring of 2009, will occur within existing governance structures and build upon current collaboration and existing agreements among the respective ministries. For example, the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and the Arts has a memorandum of understanding with conservation officers, forest officers and the RCMP to deliver C&E services for recreation management, including trail use. The level of service is dependent on the funding

that can be provided to those C&E agencies.

The province has a long-standing "observe, record and report" program where the public can notify enforcement officials when infractions occur. Trail user groups and public recreationists in general provide important "eyes and ears" for agency staff by noting and reporting violations or concerns.

Action #16: Integrate consideration of recreation trail use into resource road decisions.

Resource roads provide vital access to many recreation trails and in some cases are used as an integral part of the trail system. New resource roads can positively open up new opportunities or in some situations negatively impact existing trail use experiences by enabling use levels or types of use that a trail was not designed to accommodate. The construction and location of new resource roads, the closing or deactivation of resource roads, and changes in the condition of resource roads can therefore have a significant impact on trail use in many areas.

There are about 500 000 km of resource roads in B.C. used for forestry, oil and gas, mining, and commercial and public recreation. Various types of resource roads exist including Forest Service Roads (FSRs) managed by the Ministry of Forests and Range (about 10%), roads under a road permit to forest licensees (about 30%), other status roads managed by other tenured resource users (about 2%), and non-status and deactivated roads (over 50%). How trail interests can be considered in resource road decision-making varies depending on the type of resource road.

Resource road decisions are often based primarily on environmental, liability, safety and cost considerations. The intent of this Action is to ensure an assessment of the social and economic value of the access to trails provided by resource roads becomes an additional consideration.

It is important for trail groups to understand what opportunities exist to have their interests considered when road use decisions are made. These opportunities may exist in legislation -- or outside the legislative framework, for example, some forest companies may voluntarily provide opportunities for public input on resource roads through their forest certification initiatives.

This action would:

- raise awareness regarding the opportunities to consider trail interests in resource road decisions;
- recognize those roads that are used as trails and provide consideration for their designation as trails where they serve a dual use; and
- enable low-cost alternatives to accommodate recreation trail interests to be considered as road access plans are developed.

Action #17: Develop a "best practices" approach to the stewardship of trails on, or adjacent to, agricultural and private lands.

The vast majority of B.C. is Crown land (approximately 95%). Even so, most community-based trail networks will involve private land near urban areas in some manner. There are also trail interests on non-urban private land such as privately managed forest lands.

Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR) is a provincial zone in which agriculture is recognized as the priority use. Farming is encouraged and non-agricultural uses are controlled. The ALR covers about 5% of B.C. and includes private and public lands that may currently be farmed, forested or vacant land. Various levels of government are expected to plan in accordance with the provincial policy within the ALR of preserving agricultural land. To this end, the Ministry of Agriculture and Lands has developed A Guide to Using and Developing Trails in Farm and Ranch Areas www.alc.gov.bc.ca/publications/publications.htm. This document outlines a current 'best practices' approach that may be refined and updated as required.

It is important that private landowners, agricultural interests (including farmers and the Agricultural Land Commission), and trail users are mutually satisfied that the best approach possible is taken to managing trails and trail use.

Enabling some trail access on or adjacent to private land or agricultural land to the satisfaction of landowners and managers is important because:

- private landowners ultimately control access and trail users need to respect their rights;
- it is vital that the agricultural values in the ALR be protected;
- a provincial trail network that links communities with long-distance trails will

invariably require some access to private land and/or agricultural land; and
- some key areas of Crown land can be most effectively accessed for recreational trail use by crossing portions of private land and agricultural land.

Overall, the objective of a "best practices" approach should be to develop and retain a mutually supportive relationship between trail users, landowners and agricultural interests. Over time, and with the support of local government, there should also be more thought and work put into developing a greater range of appropriate incentives and benefits to agricultural interests and private landowners who support trails as well as improved opportunities to protect established rights of way over agricultural and private lands.

Some components of a "best practices" approach should include:
- Proactive consultation - including annual review sessions, between trail user groups, private landowners and agricultural interests, to review and resolve any issues arising from the development, management and use of trails.
- Code of conduct – to help ensure that trail users respect and protect the interests of private landowners, farmers and ranchers.
- Written agreements - up to and including legal covenants. Such agreements can clarify the objectives, roles and responsibilities for trail users, trail stewardship groups and landowners.
- Incentives for private landowners - such as some level of municipal property tax relief to offset the costs of hosting a community asset such as a trail. This might also extend to greater consideration and accommodation for trail-side businesses such as 'Bed and Breakfast' lodging, restaurants, wineries and bicycle repair shops.

STRATEGIC INFORMATION AND MARKETING

Action #18: Develop and maintain an inventory of trails.

An inventory of trails can identify various types of trails, where they are located, who manages the trails and their approval status, what uses the trails are intended for, and any restrictions on use.

The advantages of developing and maintaining an up-to-date inventory include:

- providing information on the existing trail network that can be used in planing the desired future network;
- identifying where different types of trails, and their intended use, are located so that users can plan according to their expectations, thereby helping to reduce potential conflicts;
- providing information that can support marketing of specific trails where there is community and trail user group support (see Action #19); and
- providing trail information to other resource users so that trail values can be factored into their plans and practices.

The inventory needs to be collaboratively built by the various agencies and trail user groups with knowledge about trails. The inventory needs to be carefully designed so as to not inadvertently cause impacts to specific trails or user groups. Considerations include:

- incrementally building the inventory over phases with initial focus on the existing local inventories that have been developed by communities and user groups;
- designing an inventory whose access does not cause local clubs to lose scarce revenues via the sale of trail maps and/or trail passes; and
- limiting access to the inventory for those trails that can not handle additional use and should not be promoted as determined by the community and local user groups.

The trails inventory needs to be linked to B.C.'s data atlas system where a variety of recorded interests on Crown land such as forestry, land tenures, subsurface resource use, and many others are readily accessible. One of the key uses of the data atlas is to do 'status checks' so that existing interests in Crown land can be appropriately considered in Crown land management decision-making by agency staff and tenured resource users. It is therefore important that all approved trails on Crown land be inventoried and linked to the data atlas.

Action #19: Undertake a comprehensive survey of trail users.

An up-to-date comprehensive survey of trail users in B.C. can provide an accurate estimate of trail use, trip expenditures, use preferences, and related information.

A carefully designed user survey can yield results that are critical for several reasons, including:

- providing data that can strengthen the business case for investing in trails (e.g. by quantifying the amount and type of trail use, and economic and other benefits associated with trail use);
- providing the information necessary to ensure that land managers invest wisely and target the highest priorities; and
- establishing a baseline of information that can be compared with past surveys and can be used to highlight key trends; for example in trail use and recreational demand.

Several recreation or trail surveys have been conducted in the past by various B.C. organizations. Each of the surveys provides valuable information to the organizations that commissioned the work. However they provide only part of the picture related to overall trail use in B.C., and they were conducted at different times using varying methods that make comparisons difficult.

A comprehensive survey that addresses the full range of trail use activities in all jurisdictions and regions of the province by both residents and non-residents is needed in order to provide the up-to-date baseline information that can support trail planning and management. It would be best if such a comprehensive survey could address a full range of outdoor recreation activities including trail use.

The survey needs to be carefully designed to avoid bias and could be effectively delivered by academic institutions in partnership with government and user groups. Although the information obtained from a survey can provide vital information, other aspects of the ***Trails Strategy*** such as collaborative planning can still proceed without it.

Action #20: Support the marketing of trails where there is community and trail user group support.

British Columbia has set a goal of doubling tourism revenues by 2015. This will be assisted by strategic tourism planning such as B.C.'s Tourism Action Plan, and the encouragement of private and public sector investments. This ***Trails Strategy*** represents one of the key actions in the Tourism Action Plan. This action supports the marketing of specific trails where there is community and trail user group

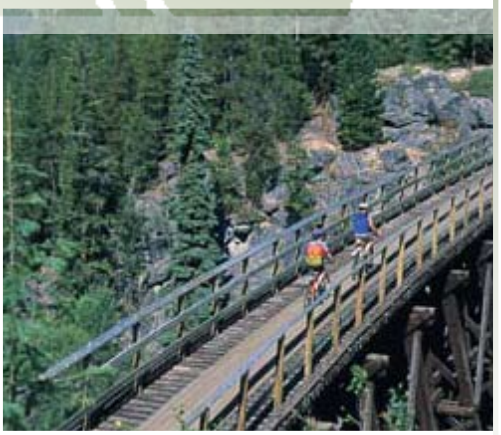
support while recognizing that some trails should not be, or are not currently suitable for, marketing.

When locally supported, a trails marketing strategy can:

- increase recognition of those recreation trails that can handle additional use and that provide a high quality user experience; and
- improve linkages between the trails network and the tourism sector, thereby capitalizing on the economic benefits associated with increased tourism.

An effective marketing strategy for those trails where there is local support will stimulate more trips by residents and destination tourists, increase the length of stay and increase the financial expenditures per trip on recreation trails. These outcomes will contribute to the province's goal of doubling tourism revenues. Marketing of appropriate trails will also create awareness amongst citizens of the depth and diversity of recreation trails and enable them to use those trails with increasing frequency.

IMPLEMENTATION



Action #21: Establish a provincial trail advisory body to provide advice on the implementation of the *Trails Strategy* and the B.C. Trail Program.

To be successful, a ***Trails Strategy*** needs to be supported by an effective implementation process that involves the coordinated efforts of provincial and local governments, First Nations, various trail organizations, and the public. At the provincial-level, the ***Trails Strategy*** Committee (TSC) has assisted government in the development of this ***Trails Strategy***. The formation of a trail advisory body, comprising interests similar to TSC, will help ensure that an approved Strategy is effectively implemented.

The advisory body can:

- assist government in ensuring that implementation is consistent with the intent of the ***Trails Strategy***;
- advise government of any recommended improvements to the ***Trails Strategy*** such as through a formal review every two years; and
- provide a collaborative forum for the many trails organizations and interests to help ensure that the ***Trails Strategy*** continues to meet the needs of all trail users.

Most advisory bodies, to be effective, are relatively small in size consisting of core interests. A trail advisory body could be supported by a larger network of agencies and organizations that value and/or have concerns about trails so that the full range of interests are considered during Strategy implementation.

Action #22: Support existing local and regional trail committees or groups, and where not present encourage their establishment so that they can assist implementation and continuous improvement of the *Trails Strategy*.

This ***Trails Strategy*** is intended to present the overarching foundation for a world class provincial trails network. The trails themselves, however, exist on-the-ground in communities and regions throughout the province; therefore any successful strategy must connect the provincial level to the local and regional levels.

Local trail stewardship groups, First Nations, and regional and local governments

all have a vital role to play in implementing the approved Strategy. In some areas of B.C., local or regional committees or groups that represent a wide range of trail user groups are already in place and working effectively. This action is intended to support their efforts.

Where regional or local groups do not exist, it is recommended that a forum be created to help foster improved communication and cooperation in the regions among various trail interests, agencies, First Nations and local government.

Local or regional trail committees would:

- establish a local collaborative team of trail supporters and stakeholders;
- support the provincial trail advisory body and the province to more effectively incorporate local needs into the implementation of the approved ***Trails Strategy***;
- undertake on-the-ground actions identified in the Strategy (e.g. development of inventories and maps) that are necessary for effective implementation; and
- provide a key forum to support the development of local trail system plans (action #33).

Regional or local trail committees or groups can be a structured government forum (e.g. regional district park and trail committee) and/or a group established and led by a non-government organization ideally with government support and involvement.

Action #23: Develop an implementation plan that identifies specific timelines and responsibilities for implementing the Strategy.

With the ***Trails Strategy*** approved, an implementation plan will ensure that each of the approved actions is carried out as effectively and efficiently as possible. An implementation plan can:

- ensure accountability by clearly identifying roles and responsibilities of various organizations committed to working together to deliver the Strategy;
- target key timelines and milestones needed to help ensure the Strategy is delivered in a timely manner; and
- provide the commitment from partnering organizations needed to attain the world-class trail system aspired-to in the Strategy Vision.

Some actions within the Strategy can be initiated or piloted within a year while others depend on funding resource support or support for legislative change that may take more time to secure. Overall the Strategy is intended to be implemented over a 10-year timeframe.

IN CLOSING

Numerous individuals and organizations kindly provided input that has helped shape the development of the ***Trails Strategy***. This included comments received at meetings held across the province and though written submissions. Thanks to all of you who provided this valuable feedback.

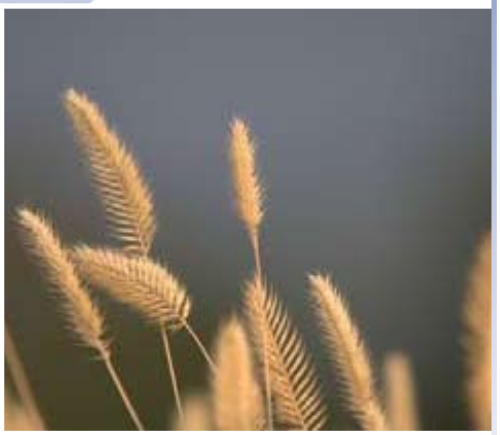
With the ***Trails Strategy*** approved, the focus is now on implementation of the 23 approved actions identified in this document. The province and its many trails partners are now moving into this implementation phase.

Keep up-to-date on *Trails Strategy* implementation by visiting:

www.sitesandtrailsbc.ca/about/provincial-trails-strategy.aspx

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Photo Credit: Sterling Lawrence



The ***Trails Strategy*** Committee responsible for developing the ***Trails Strategy***:

John Hawkings, chair	Ministry of Tourism, Culture and the Arts
Les Auston	B.C. Snowmobile Federation
Jack Becker	B.C. Cycling Coalition
Lynn Bremner/Diane Beattie	Ministry of Environment, B.C. Parks
James Brown	International Mountain Bicycling Association
Alan Callander	Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure
Brian Farquhar	Cowichan Valley Regional District
Jon Heshka	Thompson Rivers University
Evan Loveless/Pat Harrison	Federation of Mountain Clubs of B.C.
Bill Lux	Kaska Dene First Nation
Wendy Magnes/Don Foxgord/ Richard Lewis	Tourism B.C.
Jeremy McCall	Outdoor Recreation Council of B.C.
Isabel Pritchard	Horse Council B.C., and Back Country Horsemen of B.C.
Peter Sprague	B.C. Off-Road Motorcycle Association
Bev Felske/Terry Wardrop	Quad Riders Association of B.C. (ATV/B.C.)

The Recreation Trails Steering Committee responsibilities for managing the project:

Bill Marshall, chair John Hawkings John Crooks	Ministry of Tourism, Culture and the Arts - Recreation, Sites and Trails Branch
Lynn Bremner Robin Draper	Ministry of Environment - BC Parks
Alan Callander	Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure

The ***Trails Strategy*** was prepared on behalf of the ***Trails Strategy*** Committee by Terje Vold, George Sranko, Warren Mitchell and Blair Baldwin under contract with the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and the Arts.

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