

DRAFT

TRAILS STRATEGY

FOR British Columbia



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INTRODUCTION





The Partnership Spirit For B.C. Trails

British Columbia has undertaken a multi-phase approach to developing a trails strategy for the province. The first phase involved extensive research into successful models from other jurisdictions as well as analysis of the results of a widely-distributed survey of trail users and managers.

This draft Trails Strategy is informed by the research findings and analysis and is the result of collaboration between a wide range of trail users, First Nations, and government agencies. The dedication and vision of members of the Trails Strategy Committee has guided development of this Strategy (see acknowledgements at back).

This current phase of the process includes review and comment on this working draft Strategy. Ensuing phases will involve implementation and monitoring of the final Trails Strategy, once approved by government.

The extensive background material used in developing this Trails Strategy is available on a supporting website. For more information, please visit: www.tsa.gov.B.C..ca/sites_trails/Initiatives/Prov_Trails_Strategy/recreation_trails_strategy.htm

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 B.C. trails network.



VISION

A world-renowned network of sustainable trails, accessible to all, which fosters social, cultural, health, economic and environmental benefits for trails users, communities and the province.

KEY COMPONENTS

These are the fundamental components of a sustainable trail program in B.C. and are pre-requisite to achieving the Vision. Specific actions are proposed for each component.

Collaborative Planning	Good Governance	Sustainable Resources
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Collaboratively develop provincial and local trail system plans that secure opportunities for all trail users 2. Use appropriate legislative tools to approve trails in support of a comprehensive trail network 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. Develop a communication and education strategy to better inform trail users about the existing governance framework 4. Improve legislation, regulations and policy to better manage motorized trail use 5. Enhance recreation opportunities by addressing liability issues 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 6. Provide a clear and up-to-date catalogue of various funding sources that can support trails 7. Develop a partnership approach to stable funding



GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR A WORLD CLASS SYSTEM OF TRAILS

1. Build on Partnerships and Collaboration
2. Foster Environmental and Cultural Stewardship
3. Secure Recreation Opportunities for All Users
4. Provide Benefits for Communities and the Province



Effective Management	Comprehensive Information	Strategic Marketing
8. Consolidate existing trail standards, guidelines and management tools, and ensure they are widely communicated and accessible for agency staff and user groups	12. Develop and maintain a comprehensive inventory of trails 13. Undertake a comprehensive survey of trail users	14. Undertake the development of a provincial trails marketing strategy
9. Ensure the B.C. Trail Program is well integrated with interagency compliance and enforcement services		
10. Integrate recreation trail use into resource road decisions		
11. Develop a "best practices" approach to managing trails on private land		



IMPLEMENTATION

15. Establish a provincial trail advisory body to provide advice on the implementation of the Trails Strategy and the B.C. Trail Program
16. Encourage establishment of local or regional trail committees to support implementation and continuous improvement of the Trails Strategy
17. Develop an implementation plan that identifies specific timelines and responsibilities for implementing the Strategy

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 we treasure and enable meaningful connections between one another and with 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.

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

- Tourism Action Plan to double tourism revenues by 2015;
- New Relationships with First Nations and the Aboriginal Cultural Tourism Blueprint Strategy for British Columbia;
- 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 LocalMotion;; and the
- Mountain Pine Beetle Action Plan with the goal to diversify local economies and grow tourism.

This draft 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.

VISION





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

A world-renowned network of sustainable trails, accessible to all, which fosters social, cultural, health, economic and environmental benefits for trails users, communities and the province.

This Strategy is a call to action; an invitation to all British Columbians to join in supporting and developing a world class trails system

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. Such an inclusive approach is consistent with developing and maintaining an integrated network of trails across the province to achieve the strategic Vision.

This Trails Strategy outlines six key components of a sustainable trail system that have been identified as vital to achieving the vision (collaborative planning; good governance; sustainable resources; effective management; comprehensive information, and strategic marketing). For each component specific actions are proposed along with relevant outcomes.

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 economic and social benefits.

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 better 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:

- **Economic** – increased tourism spending, greater business investment, enhanced property values, and higher tax revenues
- **Community** – increased economic development and diversity, increased understanding and respect for heritage and culture
- **Health** – improved health and physical well-being, for both individuals and communities
- **Environment** – enhanced environmental awareness, better understanding of our natural heritage, and better stewardship of the environment
- **Transportation** – greener transportation and commuting use of trails contribute to overall community and regional sustainability

GUIDING PRINCIPLES





Guiding principles establish the touchstone foundation to guide implementation of the Trails Strategy.

1. **Build on Partnerships and Collaboration:** a trails system that is truly world class can only be achieved through extensive partnerships and collaboration between First Nations, diverse trail user groups, and all levels of government - municipal, regional, provincial and federal. This draft Trails Strategy was built through the collaborative efforts of the Trails Strategy Committee (see Acknowledgements at back), and will be improved through further collaboration during its public review. The most effective way to implement an approved Trails Strategy will be to maintain a partnership spirit.
2. **Foster Environmental and Cultural Stewardship:** the trail network must ensure environmental sustainability and respect for cultural heritage values. Maintaining integrity of the environment and respecting First Nations' cultural heritage values must underlie all aspects of trail planning and management. Legitimate trails and trail use can only occur where these values are respected and protected.
3. **Secure Recreation Opportunities for All Users:** the trails system must provide recreation opportunities for all trail users. Trail use conflict is rooted in the real or perceived lack of available opportunities to one or more particular user groups. The system must be responsive to gaps where user opportunities need to be more adequately provided. Securing use opportunities for all users through trail planning and management is fundamental to a world class trails system.
4. **Provide Benefits for Communities and the Province:** the trail network must provide the full suite of social, cultural, health, economic and environmental benefits for local communities and the province so that the Trails Strategy Vision can be attained. A diversity of trails for a variety of trail users will help deliver the considerable benefits associated with trails to all British Columbians.

CURRENT STATUS





HOW MANY KILOMETRES OF TRAIL DO WE HAVE IN B.C.?

As a result of the dedication and hard-work of British Columbians over many decades, we are fortunate to enjoy an extensive range of recreation trails today. Best estimates put the trails network at about 30,000 kilometres... and this number is conservative! Many recreation trails are not authorized and currently there's no consistent record available to track these trails. What we do know 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 tourists 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 trails (1000 km); rail trails (2000 km) managed by various agencies; recreation trails (9000 km) managed by Ministry of Tourism, Culture and the Arts (MTCA); provincial park trails (7000 km) managed by B.C. Parks; and national park trails (1000 km) managed by Parks Canada. Rail trails include 1000 km of Spirit of 2010 Trails and 1000 km of abandoned rail trails. In addition, there are a large number of trails on private land.



RAIL TRAILS, SPIRIT OF 2010 TRAILS, AND TRANS CANADA TRAIL

B.C. 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.

B.C.'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.).

HERITAGE AND FIRST NATIONS TRAILS

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.

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, and off road vehicle use.

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

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.

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.

Communities that encourage physical activity by making use of linear corridors are registering a significant positive influence on public health and wellness.

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 main trends has been an increase in demand for trails due to the many different kinds of activities that have increased in volume and popularity (e.g. mountain biking, cycling for recreation and transportation, horseback riding, all terrain vehicle riding, snowmobiling, off-road motorcycling, walking and hiking).



One reflection of changing demographics is an increase in demand for trails that can be used by motorized recreationists. Rapid changes in technology for snowmobiles and off-road vehicles are also changing trail use patterns. Of course, such 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 better 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.

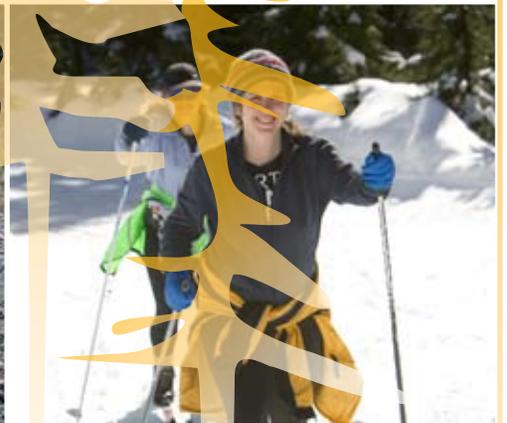
INCREASING RECOGNITION OF ECONOMIC BENEFITS

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 better integrating all modes of transportation, such as improved linkages between road systems and commuter bike routes.

PRIORITY ISSUES





The B.C. Recreation Trail Survey was sent to a wide range of groups and organizations including local, provincial and federal government agencies; provincial outdoor recreation organizations; tourism organizations; forest associations; academic/ outdoor recreation institutions; and First Nations.

The survey was designed to gather input primarily from provincial organizations that could represent the views of local clubs and individuals in a coordinated response.

A Background Report prepared for this Strategy describes several key trail-related issues identified via a widely-distributed survey of trail user groups throughout the province.

The key issues in relative order of priority were:

- **Access:** such as limitations due to private land, deteriorating resource roads, and restrictions on motorized/ mechanized use;
- **Limited funding:** to develop and maintain trails;
- **Insurance/liability:** such as insurance costs and liability exposure;
- **Environmental impacts:** such as soil erosion and streamside damage, and damage caused by off-road vehicle use;
- **Limited resources:** such as need to attract and maintain skilled volunteers;
- **Legislation:** such as need for improvements related to management of off-road vehicle trail use;
- **Trails information:** such as need for maps, brochures and websites;
- **Signage:** such as educational signs that promote safe and responsible use;
- **Increasing trail use:** underscoring the need for improved trail construction and maintenance; and
- **Compliance and enforcement:** such as need for adequate compliance and enforcement services and enforceable rules.

Each of the priority issues is addressed under an appropriate key component and proposed action in the sections that follow.

KEY COMPONENTS AND ACTIONS





These components represent the fundamental requirements of a sustainable trail program for British Columbia.

Six key components have been identified for a sustainable trail program:

1. **Collaborative Planning:** The process whereby opportunities for all trail users are secured through collaborative partnerships with First Nations, government agencies at all levels, and trail user groups, including appropriate linkages between Crown and private lands.
2. **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 world class trail system.
3. **Sustainable Resources:** Refers to efforts made to utilize existing funds for trail projects and initiatives aimed at securing additional stable funding to establish and sustain a world class trails system over the long term. Funding provides the “seed” support needed to attract volunteers and to develop partnership projects.
4. **Effective Management:** These are the numerous and varied activities needed to support and maintain the trail system. They include development and communication of standards, the compliance and enforcement regime, resource road access considerations, and a ‘best practices’ approach to managing trails on private land.
5. **Comprehensive Information:** Fundamental data needs to be gathered to design, develop and maintain a world class trail system. This information is best gathered through a comprehensive trail inventory and trail user survey.
6. **Strategic Marketing:** The benefits of a world class trail network are best delivered through a provincial marketing strategy that supports efforts made by local government at the regional district and municipal level.



PROPOSED ACTIONS FOR KEY COMPONENTS

Actions are proposed for each component to begin the process of building a world-renowned trail program.

COLLABORATIVE PLANNING

Proposed Action #1:

Collaboratively develop provincial and local trail system plans that secure opportunities for all trail users.

There is a tremendous range of natural and cultural diversity in B.C. and this is reflected in the array 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.

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 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 trail system plans such as:

- Reducing impacts on the environment 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.

Implementing this action will require a comprehensive review of local and regional trail planning processes, and then applying the learning from the best examples to ongoing planning and mapping processes. It will be helpful to identify a provincial 'champion' to provide leadership and support for trail planning.

Proposed Action #2:

Use appropriate legislative tools to approve trails 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 thousands of additional km 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 appropriate regulations. 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:

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

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.

GOOD GOVERNANCE

Proposed Action #3:

Develop a communication and education strategy to better inform trail users 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 and works well. The existing framework is, however, complex and confusing given the many pieces of legislation, regulation and policy that exist, and the multi-agency roles in trail management.

Opportunities derived from a clear communication and education strategy include:

- Better informed trails users who can see how the legislative framework relates to their interest and use of trails;
- More sustainable trail use as users see how the pieces of legislation, regulation and policy ‘fit together’ to make them enforceable; and
- Greater ability for trail groups and users to comply 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 trail use including the *Heritage Conservation Act*, *Wildlife Act*, *Occupiers Liability Act*, and *Motor Vehicle (All Terrain) Act*. Describing how all these pieces of legislation ‘fit together’ in managing trails is one key to raising public awareness and support.

Proposed Action #4:

Improve legislation, regulations and policy to better manage motorized trail use.

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 and motorized trail use has substantially increased. There are significant opportunities to improve legislation to better 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; and



- Conflicts are resolved before they impact relations with other trail and resource users.

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. 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 developed and marketed.

Proposed Action #5:

Enhance recreation opportunities by addressing liability issues.

Issues of liability and managing risk are some of the most formidable challenges facing trail managers 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;
- 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 proposed action, it is recommended that:

- In the short term the effectiveness of the Occupiers Liability Act be reviewed; and
- In the long term the feasibility of introducing new inherent risk legislation be examined.



Improvements made to the Occupiers Liability Act in the past decade should be reviewed to see how effective they are at lowering liability risk to landowners. We all recognize that some outdoor activities entail higher levels of risk. Several jurisdictions have introduced inherent risk legislation that places more accountability on the individual trail user and helps reduce liability risk to landowners. This approach also lessens legal exposure of trail stewardship groups thereby increasing their interest in developing and managing trails. Insurance is generally more attainable and affordable where inherent risk legislation exists.

SUSTAINABLE RESOURCES

Proposed Action #6:

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 better 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:

- Better 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 proposed action is intended to provide better 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.

Proposed Action #7:

Develop a partnership approach to stable funding.

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

The opportunities derived from stable funding therefore include:

- A consistent core funding envelope to help ensure a sustainable B.C. Trail Program;
- A provincial trail network that is effectively developed and maintained;
- Greater ability to stretch program funds through public/private partnerships and use of volunteers; and
- Improved trail opportunities associated with tourism and community economic diversification.

Stable sources that provide “seed” funding can be augmented in several ways, including: 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.

Building on the successful experiences of stable funding models already in place, B.C. can develop an equally successful 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.

EFFECTIVE MANAGEMENT

Proposed Action #8:

Consolidate existing trail standards, guidelines and management tools, and ensure they are widely communicated and accessible for agency staff and user groups.

There are numerous carefully developed trail standards, guidelines 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 standards and tools have not been consolidated, however, and cannot be readily found. Simply put, people will not follow standards that can't be found.

The following important outcomes will become more attainable once the standards and tools are consolidated for easier access:

- Safe trail use;
- Low impact practices, sustainable design and respect for the environment; and
- Respect for other trail users.

One potential solution is to provide access to the complete list of standards and tools 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 standards and tools over time. However, in many cases local trail users are not associated with such



organizations and may not be aware of the standards. In some cases, even the organizations themselves do not list relevant standards and tools on their respective websites.

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

Proposed Action #9:

Ensure the B.C. Trail Program is well integrated with interagency compliance and enforcement services.

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 improve:

- Compliance with trail use regulations and rules;
- Awareness about existing C&E services and how they can support trail management; and
- Cooperative approaches to compliance through programs such as "observe, record and report."

The Ministry of Tourism, Culture and the Arts has recently signed a memorandum of understanding with conservation officers, forest officers and the RCMP so their services can be better utilized 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 enforcement staff by noting and reporting violations.



Proposed Action #10:

Integrate 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.

It is important for trail groups to understand what opportunities are available under new and existing legislation so their interests on Crown land are considered when road use decisions are made. Relevant legislation includes the proposed Resource Road Act as well as existing legislation such as the Forest and Range Practices Act. Voluntary initiatives such as forest certification can also influence resource road decisions.

This action would enable:

- Improved opportunities for recreation trail access;
- Roads to be designated as trails where they serve a dual use; and
- Better opportunities to explore low-cost alternatives to accommodate recreation interests as road access plans are developed.

One current project, the interagency Resource Road Act initiative, is consolidating current legislation under a new Act with the goal of providing a more consistent, fair, and cost-effective regulatory and management framework. The new Act, if and when approved, is anticipated to allow for improved consistency of road use rules, construction, maintenance, and deactivation activities, as well as compliance and enforcement tools. The desired outcome is to collectively improve safety and reduce the environmental impacts of resource roads.

Proposed Action #11:

Develop a “best practices” approach to managing trails on private land.



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. It is important that both private landowners 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 to the satisfaction of landowners is important because:

- Private landowners ultimately control access and trail users need to respect their rights;
- A provincial trail network that links communities with long-distance trails will invariably require some access to private land; and
- Some key areas of Crown land can be most effectively accessed for recreational trail use by crossing portions of private land.

Overall, the objective of a “best practices” approach should be to develop and retain a mutually supportive relationship between trail users and landowners.

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 landowners who support trails. Some components of a “best practices” approach should include:

- Proactive consultation - including annual review sessions, between trail user groups and private landowners, to review and resolve any issues arising from the development, management and use of trails.
- 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.



COMPREHENSIVE INFORMATION

Proposed Action #12:

Develop and maintain a comprehensive inventory of trails.

A comprehensive inventory of trails can identify the full range 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 planning the desired future network;
- Clarifying trail standards and use criteria so that users can plan according to their expectations, thereby helping to reduce potential conflicts; and
- Serving as a marketing tool by identifying trail locations and amenities as well as tourism opportunities.

The inventory needs to be collaboratively built by the various agencies and trail user groups with knowledge about trails. The inventory should be web-based and easy for trail users to access so that the communication and marketing opportunities are fully realized. This also enables the private sector to use that information to enhance trail-related business interests. Volunteers can provide a rich knowledge base that should be sought where it can be easily contributed to the inventory database.

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.



Proposed Action #13:

Undertake a comprehensive survey of trail users.

There is a strong need for an up-to-date comprehensive survey of trail users in B.C. to provide an accurate estimate of trail use, trip expenditures, use preferences, and related information.

An up-to-date 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 better 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, recreational demand and economic development.

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 needed to 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.



STRATEGIC MARKETING

Proposed Action #14:

Undertake the development of a provincial trails marketing strategy.

B.C. 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.

A provincial trails marketing strategy is recommended in order to:

- Increase recognition that one of B.C.'s major competitive assets is its network of recreation trails that, with respect to the user experience, is amongst the best in the world; and
- Improve linkages between the trails network and the tourism sector, thereby capitalizing on the economic benefits associated with increased tourism.

An effective trail marketing strategy 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 goals of doubling tourism revenues. The provincial marketing will also create awareness amongst citizens of the depth and diversity of recreation trails and enable them to use the trails with increasing frequency.

IMPLEMENTATION





Proposed Action #15:

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 final Trails Strategy;
- Advise government of any recommended improvements to the Trails Strategy over time; 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.

Proposed Action #16:

Encourage establishment of local or regional trail committees to support 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. 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.



This forum can be achieved through establishment and ongoing support (e.g., resources and financial considerations) of local or regional trails committees.

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 local/ regional trail plans, inventories and maps) that are necessary for effective implementation; and
- Provide a key forum to support the development of local trail system plans (proposed action #1).

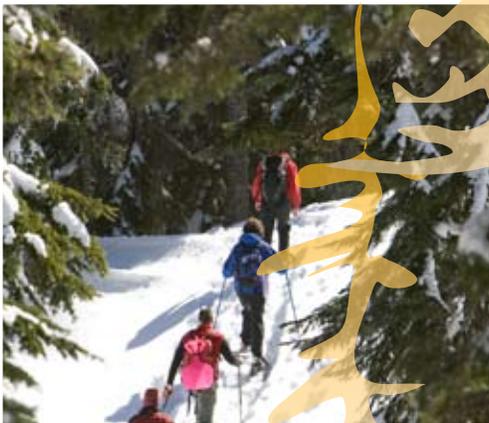
Proposed Action #17:

Develop an implementation plan that identifies specific timelines and responsibilities for implementing the Strategy.

Once the Trails Strategy is 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.

NEXT STEPS





This Trails Strategy was developed with the advice and support of a Trails Strategy Committee that is representative of a wide range of trails interests and users. This document has already benefited greatly from their input and council and therefore should present a relatively complete, appropriate and stable strategy. Still, in support of the collaborative and consultative Guiding Principles, and to ensure the widest possible support for any final Strategy, further review and input from a broader range of trails users and the public is beneficial and will undoubtedly strengthen the Strategy.

Therefore, we encourage everyone to read this document in detail, share it as widely as possible with colleagues and friends, discuss it with other interested people and groups, and offer your comments, suggestions and recommendations.

Your comments can be submitted until December 31, 2008.

After this date, a final Trails Strategy will be prepared and then submitted to the provincial government in Spring 2009 for acceptance and implementation.

If you require any further information or have any questions, please consult the Trails Strategy website at the address below. Your questions will be considered and the answers will be posted on this site.

*Please submit any comments in writing through the Trails Strategy website at:
www.tsa.gov.B.C..ca/sites_trails/managing/recreation_trails_strategy.htm*

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS



Photo Credit: Sterling Lawrence





The Trails Strategy Committee responsible for developing this draft Trails Strategy consists of:

John Hawkings, Chair	Ministry of Tourism, Culture and the Arts
Les Auston	B.C. Snowmobile Federation
Jack Becker	B.C. Cycling Coalition
Lynn Bremner	Ministry of Environment , B.C. Parks
James Brown	International Mountain Bicycling Association
Alan Callander	Ministry of Transportation
Brian Farquhar	Cowichan Valley Regional District
Bev Felske	Quad Riders Association of B.C. (ATV/B.C.)
Jon Heshka	Thompson River University
Evan Loveless	Federation of Mountain Clubs of B.C.
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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

The Recreation Trails Steering Committee, with overall responsibilities for managing the project including review of the draft Trails Strategy, consists of:

Bill Marshall, chair John Crooks John Hawkings Fred Thiessen	Ministry of Tourism, Culture and the Arts - Recreation, Sites and Trails Branch
Lynn Bremner Robin Draper	Ministry of Environment - B.C. Parks

This draft Trails Strategy was prepared on behalf of the Trails Strategy Committee by Terje Vold, George Sranko, Warren Mitchell and Blair Baldwin.

TRAILS STRATEGY

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