



## ESTBA MISSION AND VISION

### **ESTBA MISSION**

The mission of the East Shore Trail and Bike Association is to have a community coordinated, inclusive process to strategically guide the preservation of, use and environmentally sustainable growth of *non-motorized* trail use and user groups on Kootenay Lakes East Shore.

### **ESTBA VISION**

The vision of the East Shore Trail and Bike Association is to have:

- A collaborative and sustainable process to review and coordinate trail management annually;
- Identified and empowered trail groups as champions to guide strategic location and selection of new trails and growth areas;
- Identified and empowered trail groups as champions in the protection and maintenance of existing areas while aiming to formalize legal status of trails;
- Support from all stakeholders, including water-user groups, for a managed trail network
- Identified areas for growth and trail development.

## **ESTBA GUIDING PRINCIPLES**

The guiding principles of this plan are to:

- Coordinate local groups;
- Educate trail users;
- Develop standards for trail construction, use and maintenance;
- Coordinate trail use and recreation with other activities such as logging;
- Increase the profile and recognition within the community of trails and recreation;
- Increase profile of trails maintenance and environmental stewardship;
- Guide strategic location / selection of new trails;
- Balance trail types with trail use to match needs of the community; and
- Identify unregistered trails that will be legally registered

## **TRAIL USES**

Trails within ESTBA's managed network have specific uses, as follows:

- Non-motorized means that motorcycles, ATVs and snowmobiles are not permitted;
- Specific uses can be limited to bikes only, just foot traffic, horses only, no bikes, etc

## TRAIL DESIGNATIONS

**This plan recognizes several types of trail designations as follows:**

- No Trail Use is for areas that are too sensitive for recreation. These areas will be identified as an outcome of community consultation
- **Unmanaged land:** Individual trail Use of Crown land has the fewest restrictions. Generally, trails on Crown land are open to the public within fairly broad legal requirements. In these areas trails are not publicized, designated or used for commercial purposes
- **Managed trail use** comes with some specific rights and some restrictions. Legal designation on Crown Land requires public consultation and provides a level of protection from non-designated uses. Not all existing trails are publicized or designated. Legal Designation would be under **Section 56 and / or Section 57 of the Forest and Range Practices Act.**
- Section 56 is legislative mechanism for designating a trail on the land base. It does not, by itself, confer a right to any group or individual to use, construct or to do work on a trail.
- Section 57, on the other hand requires anyone doing work on a trail (construction, rehabilitation and maintenance) to have authorization from the Minister (or delegate). Section 57 is not a type of trail designation. It establishes authority for an applicant or proponent and is specific to that applicant, not to the trail. It does not matter if the trail in question is established under section 56. So if a new group or individual wants to work on a trail for which authorization may have been granted previously to a different group, additional authorization would be required.
- Commercial trail use occurs on both designated and non- designated trails. Legal Designation would be under Section 56 and / or Section 57 of the Forest and Range Practices Act. Public consultation is required for commercial use of trails adjacent to communities

# Building Sustainable Trails

There are three goals we strive for when designing, maintaining and building trails:

- 1) limit environmental impacts
- 2) keep maintenance requirements to a minimum
- 3) avoid user conflicts.



## **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, totaling 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.



# THE TRANS CANADA TRAIL



## About the Trans Canada Trail

Launched in 1992 as a legacy project for Canada's 125<sup>th</sup> anniversary, the Trail today is a network of 493 recreational trails, stretching just over 17,000 kilometers from coast to coast to coast. It showcases urban, rural and wilderness areas in every province and territory, and offers Canadians and visitors countless opportunities to experience Canada's natural beauty and diversity. When connected, it will stretch 23,000 km from the Atlantic to the Pacific to the Arctic Oceans, through every province and territory, linking over 1000 communities and all Canadians. The Trans Canada Trail is responsible for the overall direction and design of the Trail. The TCT works with partner organizations that coordinate regional planning and Trail development. The TCT also works with local trail groups who build and manage local trails.

### The TCT has three key roles:

- **Support trail building at the local level** by funding community trail projects, supporting and engaging territorial and provincial partners, and directing the energy of volunteers and supporters.
- **Promote the Trans Canada Trail network** by enhancing the Trail's profile, emphasizing the benefits of the Trail, and encouraging Canadians and visitors to enjoy the Trail.
- **Execute a robust fund development program** to raise the funds needed for the construction, signing, promotion and long-term maintenance of the Trail.

## **British Columbia and the TCT**

Generally, when describing the trail, we describe its eastbound direction, starting from the Pacific Ocean in Victoria and traveling to the Alberta border at Elk Pass. This incorporates 6 of the 7 regions (Vancouver Island to East Kootenay). The trail weaves its way through 7 mountain ranges on a journey more than 1750 km long. A portion of the Trans Canada Trail also runs north from Vancouver to Whistler along the Sea to Sky Trail.

The trail is still in development, though 80% is complete and operational, many people are already using portions of the trail throughout the province - often on a daily basis.

The Trans Canada Trail is made up of close to 500 individual trails, each with unique and varied features. This contributes to the diversity and grandeur of Canada's national Trail. For day trips or multi-day adventures, the Trail offers countless opportunities to explore and discover. Today, four out of five Canadians live within 30 minutes of completed sections of the Trail.

The Trans Canada Trail is a community-based project. Trail sections are owned, operated and maintained by local organizations, provincial authorities, national agencies and municipalities across Canada. **The Trans Canada Trail does not own or operate any trail.**

The Trans Canada Trail is represented by provincial and territorial organizations that are responsible for championing the cause of the Trail in their region. These provincial and territorial partners together with local trail-building organizations are an integral part of the Trans Canada Trail and are the "driving force" behind its development. Their collective membership represents approximately 1,500,000 volunteers across Canada. **Within BC, the provincial partner is the Trails Society of British Columbia (aka Trails BC)**



In British Columbia, the Trans Canada Trail runs nearly 1,700 km from Victoria to the Rocky Mountains, through some of the most spectacular scenery in the world. It passes through or near many communities including: Victoria, Duncan, and Nanaimo on Vancouver Island; the North Shore, Vancouver and Lower Mainland communities to Langley, Chilliwack, and Hope in the Fraser Valley; Princeton, Penticton, and Kelowna in the Okanagan; Kootenay and Rocky Mountain communities including Grand Forks, Trail, Crawford Bay and Cranbrook, and onto the British Columbia-Alberta border. It will have spur trails linking to it as the British Columbia Trail Network develops. In the province's north, the trail runs an additional 1,000 km along the Alaska Highway from Dawson Creek, BC to Watson lake, Yukon in order to connect the Yukon Territory and the Arctic Ocean using a land route (as opposed to the water route from Alberta to the Arctic via the Northwest Territories).



## **East Shore Trail and Bike Association (ESTBA) and the TCT**

On Kootenay Lakes East Shore the Trail currently follows the highway 3A route from the ferry landing at Kootenay Bay over to Crawford Bay and then south to Gray Creek where it leaves the highway and heads east up the Gray Creek FSR to Kimberley.

Proponents of the project hope to keep the trail off highway 3A from Weasel Creek FSR to the north end of Wilmot Road in Gray Creek. From there we will connect to Oliver Road via power line or reestablish an old right-of-way across Croisdale Creek and connect to the Gray Creek FSR.

Much of this segment is complete with only 3 short sections needing to be connected as the service access roads drop down to the highway. ESTBA would like to build the trails to connect the sections. To discourage ORV use our plan would be to hand dig an 18" wide full bench trail into the natural contour of the upper slope using with a 5% out slope. The trail would also have very minor rolling grade reversals to shed run off and avoid degradation of the trail or slope. The segments are between 500' and 800'. These segments do not pass near any power poles or supporting infrastructure. The whole segment would be signed and designated "non-motorized" with trail head kiosks offering information, maps and sponsorship information. The trail and signage will be maintained regularly by ESTBA and it's supporters.

## What is Risk Management?

Risk management is a systemized approach to incorporating safety into the trail experience. At the most basic level, there are two trail-related risk management goals:

1. Manage the risks on your trail.
2. Minimize the losses from lawsuits

To accomplish these goals, we need to tackle three things:

1. Design and build trails appropriately
2. Manage and maintain them consistently and responsibly
3. Acquire the protection of a sound insurance policy or other risk transference strategies

## Addressing Liability

Along with the fear of increased crime rates and decreased property values, fear of being threatened with a lawsuit is a common concern among landowners adjacent to a proposed trail. Some landowners fear that a trail user will wander onto their property, get hurt, and sue. Private landowners who permit the general public to use their land for recreational purposes may have these concerns as well. Likewise, potential trail owners and managers are sometimes leery of undertaking a trail project because of the liability exposure. In general, not only are there legal protections for these circumstances but the real threat of such liability does not seem to be common.



## **REDUCING IMPACTS ON ENVIRONMENTAL AND RESOURCE VALUES**

To address potential issues of trail development and use impacts on environmental and other resource values, MFLNRO will apply the following strategies, as appropriate, to individual situations and as resources permit:

***Proactive Planning*** – Ensure that areas appropriate and suitable for trail development/use are identified through management planning processes that consider sensitive environmental and other resource values (e.g., wetlands, unstable soils, valuable habitats, cultural/heritage values).

***Environmental Design*** – As part of the trail authorization process, encourage trail and MTB clubs to work with land managers in a process to identify/map sensitive values, and design and construct trails accordingly. Apply the IMBA guidelines and Whistler standards for environmental design (e.g., stream crossings, drainage, habitat considerations, appropriate trail widths, environmentally sensitive construction materials and best practices).

***Monitoring and Impact Mitigation*** – Monitor environmental impacts from trail development and use (e.g., erosion, water quality, vegetation disturbance, wildlife disturbance), and mitigate problems as they arise. Mitigation may involve the need to permanently or temporarily close or relocate a trail or trail segment (e.g., during wet periods, during wildlife breeding periods), rehabilitate an area, re-design a trail segment or feature, educate riders, etc.

***Trail-User Education*** – Work with local mountain bike clubs and other interests to educate riders on ways to minimize environmental impacts (e.g., stay on the trail, ‘riding’ vs. ‘sliding’), and prevent the spread of noxious weeds. Use signage as appropriate.

## **Sensitive Habitat**

Great trail systems strike a balance between offering a memorable experience and the need to conserve natural features. Add artifacts, sensitive streams, or an endangered species into the mix and the job of the trail designer gets even more difficult.

## **Archaeological Sites**

- An archaeologist's primary goal is to keep artifacts in their original position in the field, not in a museum.
- Artifacts over 45 years old are considered a historical resource.
- Sometimes, historical resources have little value, despite their age.
- Archaeologists have to determine if a historical resource has integrity. Does it need to be protected? Is it associated with an important event or person? Does it have distinctive characteristics or yield important information? Lastly, it must be determined whether a trail will change the integrity of the resource.
- Some public agencies take greater strides to preserve historical resources than others. National Monuments and Parks are designed to protect the resources and educate the public, while the Army Corps of Engineers and the Bureau of Land Management are more geared towards recreation.
- Trail design should anticipate trends in both users and resources. Sometimes sensitive sites must be concealed, sometimes revealed.
- Few historical resources are found on steep side slopes. Bench cut trail built on a side slope is less likely to encounter archaeological sites.

## **Sensitive Ecosystems**

- Regrouping points designed throughout the trail are a good way to prevent users from straying from the designated area and potentially harming sensitive sites or plant life, like cryptobiotics.
- Interpretive placards on trails help educate users and protect the resources. Also, they help alert hikers to the fact that other users, like mountain bikers, may be on the trail.
- Edge habitats, also known as ecotones, are areas of transition between different ecosystems like forests and grasslands. These tend to be the most diverse and sensitive areas.
- Many land managers are concerned about the spread of noxious weeds. While trail users are not often the main cause of their spread, it is a good idea to install boot and tire wash stations at trailheads.
- Fragmentation is often sited as a negative impact of trails. However, no research proves that a given level of trail density is better or worse than another. Trail designers can minimize fragmentation's impact by locating the densest sections of trail near developed areas or trailheads.
- Often, issues related to sensitive ecosystems are wrapped up in the social issues that exist in the area, and these must also be given consideration when advocating for trail access.

## **Getting Everyone on the Same Page**

An important step in the process of promoting our community as a mountain biking destination is determining how the community perceives tourism in general, and mountain biking specifically. Trails for residents and recreation are one thing, but how do people feel about trails for tourists or about tourists using community trails?

### **Key questions for ESTBA and it's partners to consider include:**

- What is the community vision for tourism?
- What are the community's tourism priorities, if any?
- How are tourism and trails identified within the Official Community Plan?
- Will the local government provide resources for trails used to attract visitors?
- How do the volunteer groups associated with trail maintenance perceive tourists on the trails?
- Are local businesses supportive of recreational trail visitors?
- Is there interest from the wider tourism industry to build packages around new mountain biking or hiking opportunities?