Whistler's Recreation Trails Strategy

A GUIDE FOR DECISION MAKING

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Public Information Session

March 28, 2023

WHISTLER

WHISTLER: A PLACE WHERE OUR COMMUNITY THRIVES, NATURE IS PROTECTED AND GUESTS ARE INSPIRED.

Welcome

- Territorial Acknowledgement

- RTS Team

- Presentation recorded

  - Members of public will not be visible or recorded during this meeting

- Q&A after the presentation

Recreation Trails Strategy Overview

High-level direction

- A guide for trail and trail-related amenity development, improvement, access, funding and management
- NOT a trails master plan

Scope

- Municipal boundaries
- All non-motorized trail users
- Class 1 e-bikes and trials bikes
- New potential users

Eight Topic Areas

1. Trail access and staging areas
2. Environmentally responsible trail planning
3. Trail approval processes
4. Unsanctioned trails
5. Commercial and event uses
6. Communications
7. Trail inventory
8. Funding

Trail Access & Staging Areas

This topic covers how we access trails, where staging and/or parking areas are provided, and what amenities exist at trailheads.

- Identify and prioritize potential staging area additions and enhancements, considering the analysis, background information, and Trail Access and Staging Guidelines contained below in this document.

- Encourage and plan for the use of active transportation to access the trail network.

Initial Directions – What and How

- Focus of this round of engagement
- Will inform the development of the RTS, incl. final recommendations
- Developed based on
  - Background information and analysis (Engage Whistler docs)
  - Staff input
  - Committee input
    1. Trails Planning Working Group
    2. Whistler Bear Advisory Committee
    3. Forests and Wildlands Advisory Committee
    4. Recreation and Leisure Advisory Committee

RTS Development

HOW IT'S BEING DEVELOPED

1 Understand the current situation
Develop background information and analysis ✓

2 Identify 'initial directions' for the RTS ✓

3 Draft the RTS (spring 2023)

4 Finalize the RTS (fall 2023)

Gather committee* feedback and refine ✓

Gather committee* feedback and refine ✓

Gather committee* feedback and refine (summer-fall 2023)

Gather community feedback (until April 15th)

Gather community feedback (summer-fall 2023)

WE ARE HERE

Committees include: the Trails Planning Working Group, the Recreation and Leisure Advisory Committee, the Whistler Bear Advisory Committee, and the Forests and Wildlands Advisory Committee.

Community Engagement

1. **Engage Whistler – open until April 15th**
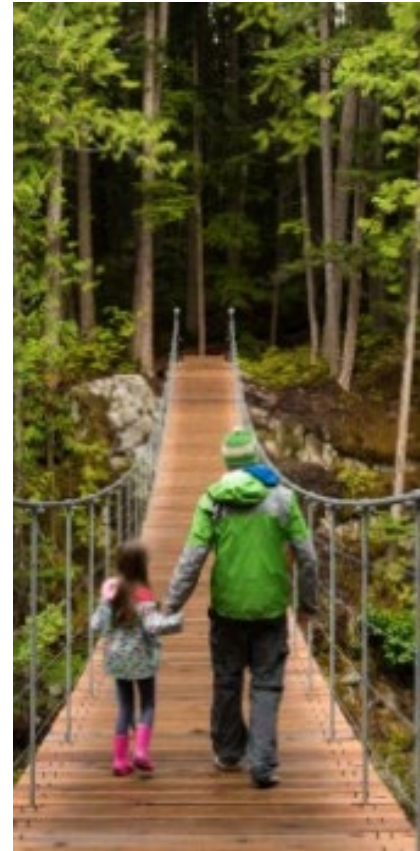   - RMOW's online engagement platform
   - engage.whistler.ca

2. **Tonight's Q&A session**
   - Presentation of sample Initial Directions
     - Use Engage Whistler
     - Review the full set of Initial Directions
     - Submit questions (and ideas)
   - We will respond to as many questions as possible tonight

3. **Pop-up booths**
   - ✓ Today 1-3pm (Library)
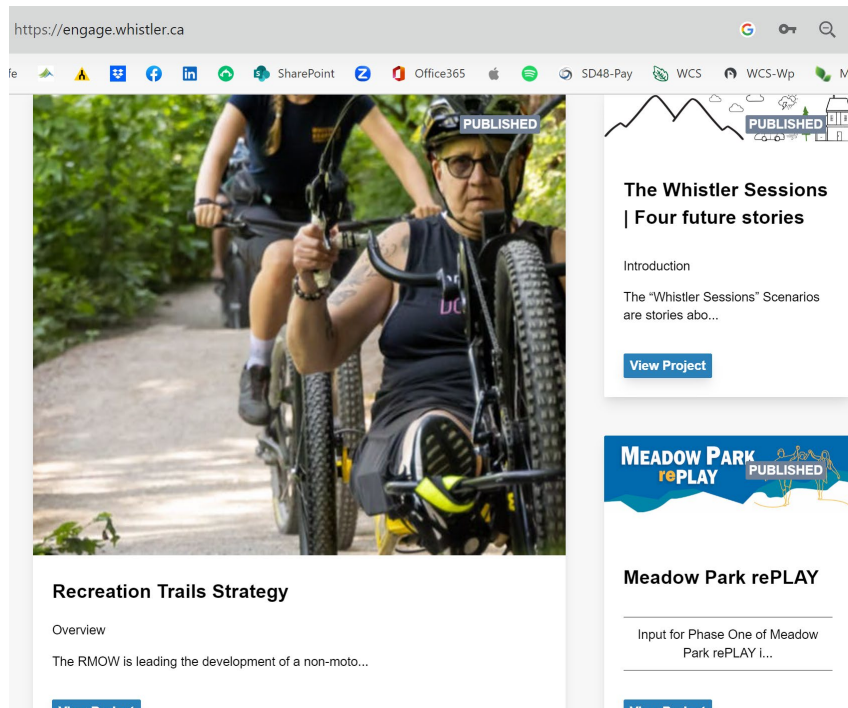   - Wed 3-5pm (Meadow Park)
   - Thurs 5-7pm (Meadow Park)

Engage Whistler

Go to engage.whistler.ca

- Topic documents (8)

- Input tools
    - About you
    - Survey
    - Ideas Boards
    - Questions (tonight's focus)

Examples from each of the 8 topic areas

Initial Directions

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Environmentally responsible trail planning

This topic area focuses on the development of a framework to enable more environmentally responsible trail planning and building.

- Develop and implement an environmentally responsible trail planning tool (the ERTP tool) based on the environmentally sensitive area rankings and mitigation strategies outlined in this document and corresponding mapping.

- Promote the use of the ERTP tool to advocacy groups.

- Maintain up to date spatial information on ESAs and continually review the ESA list and ranking to ensure any new ESAs are identified and ranking amended as required.

- Complete an assessment of the trail network against the ERTP tool to inform restoration, mitigation and/or enhanced management systems.

Table 1: Summary overview of ESA Sensitivity Ratings and Mitigation Strategies

Sensitivity rating	Environmental Sensitivity Areas/Habitat Types	Summary Mitigation Strategies
High ESA* Greatest potential impact from recreation trail activities	• High (class 1) forage grizzly habitat (all seasons) • Wetlands • Mountain goat ungulate winter range • Species At risk confirmed occurrences • Community watersheds - drinking water supply • Raptor nesting sites	• Avoid new trails wherever possible • If trails are proposed in these areas extensive field studies by Qualified Environmental Professionals or suitable specialists are expected to analyze potential impacts and provide recommendations on these features. • Existing trail maintenance and modifications in these areas must follow strict Mitigation Strategies
Medium ESA potential environmental impacts if appropriate studies and careful trails planning and Mitigation Strategies are not implemented in these areas	• Moderately high (Class 2) forage grizzly bear habitat polygons all seasons* • Riparian areas* • Forested floodplains* • Species at risk potential habitat* • Topography- slope angle over 45º • Community watersheds - other supply	• Proposed trails will require field verification to determine alignment and potential impacts on these areas. • Commitments to Mitigation Strategies and trail design for each user must be adhered to during trail authorizations
Low ESA- Trail planning and Mitigation Strategies can minimize the impact of trail construction and recreation activities on this feature	• Unlogged core forest • Coastal western hemlock old forest • Large and old cottonwoods • Tree preservation covenants • OGMA's • Cheakamus Community Forest - Ecosystem-based management reserves	• Commitments to Mitigation Strategies for each user must be adhered to during trail authorizations

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Trail approval processes

This topic covers municipal and provincial trail authorization processes, challenges, and timelines, and includes how things might be streamlined.

- Review upcoming changes to the provincial authorization process to understand the implications on future trail development proposals and opportunities within Whistler, and address implications as needed.

- Develop a municipal trail development authorization process for reviewing trails within Whistler that aligns with the provincial process regarding environmental review, First Nations consultation, and referrals to appropriate stakeholders.

Unsanctioned trails

This topic covers how we reduce unsanctioned trail building, address existing unsanctioned trails, and harness trail-building energy towards authorized development.

- Communicate through a regular education/ media campaign the potential impacts of unsanctioned trail construction on First Nations, environment, private property and long-term trail development planning.

- Identify in a trails master plan the areas that are suitable for trail construction, and direct trail builders to sanctioned opportunities that immediately engage them.

- Investigate reports of unsanctioned trail construction quickly to limit negative impacts.

Commercial and event uses

This topic covers how to balance commercial and event uses with environmental values, community priorities, and smart tourism.

- Develop a policy and review process for commercial and event use of Whistler's trails in collaboration with stakeholders

- Develop a guide that helps commercial and event proponents adhere to the policy.

Communications

This topic covers ways to more consistently, efficiently, and effectively communicate information between land managers and trail user groups.

- Develop a communication strategy for effectively communicating trail related closures and other announcements to trail users that:
  - Are coordinated across land managers and trail groups, identifying who is responsible for what
  - Clarifies key messages to ensure users are aware, in advance, of trail openings, closures and other issues, and they understand the importance of respecting closures.

Trail Inventory

This topic covers the number and types of trails in Whistler, who is responsible for them, whose land they are on, and whether they interconnect.

- Analyze and identify opportunities and deficiencies within the network to inform a master plan
  - Consider types of trails, trails targeting specific user groups, difficulties of trails, connectivity, adaptive needs, etc.
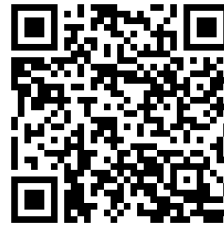
Trail Funding

This topic focuses on long-term and sustainable funding models to support trail development and ongoing trail maintenance.

- Explore long-term funding models to support the ongoing maintenance of the trail network.

- Leverage commercial and event use of the trail network to fund trail maintenance and construction.
    - For example, establish a standardized and universal commercial fee program.

Q&A

- Submit via Engage Whistler
  - engage.whistler.ca
  - Questions tab

- We will respond to as many as possible tonight
  - Otherwise, will respond online by the end of the week

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Develop background information and analysis ✓

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Thank you

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