EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

At the Premier's Economic Summit at 108 Mile Ranch in May 1999, a workshop was held on Tourism and Trails. One of the outcomes was that the province should consider the implications of a provincial trail system. The Resource Management Division (RMD) approached the Outdoor Recreation Council of BC to provide a demand (user) perspective of a trails strategy. Such a perspective should offer such information as trail users' needs/desires regarding trails, conflicts and barriers that face users, and users' concerns and recommendations to mitigate problems. Using this important perspective, along with views from various resource agencies, RMD will explore the implications of a provincial trails program for government consideration.

Compiling information found through research of past reports, surveys, and articles, this report addresses the previously mentioned issues by documenting:

- trends in outdoor recreation (involving trail usage) in BC and possible outcomes due to these trends,
- sources of conflicts amongst users; (e.g. expected trail experience of users versus actual trail experience; access; supply of trails (quality and quantity),
- methods of developing and increasing trail opportunities (identify planning and management tools; investigating necessary changes to policy and legislation, identifying new trail opportunities), and
- suggestions and recommendation to address problems and concerns.

The research and much of the writing for this project was done by Karen Tam.

Norma Wilson contributed to the writing and final editing.

This report was made possible by funding from Forest Renewal British Columbia.
In addition, a mini-survey was conducted to answer some of the questions raised in collating these studies.

The main challenges faced by users and managers include overcoming the shortage in trails supply and addressing and resolving conflicts. Many of the solutions will be user- and area- specific. Resolving conflicts will require stakeholder participation early on in the planning process, cross-jurisdictional cooperation and possibly an inventory and mapping of recreation activities. There are many actions that can be explored to maintain and increase the supply of trails. These include defining priority areas, implementing a fee system, providing more support to volunteers, soliciting corporate sponsorship, and promoting the conversion of abandoned railways and using utility corridors.

Establishment of a trail strategy is one of the main recommendations. A trail strategy developed with input from user groups will enable recreationists and government agencies to take on a more defined and strengthened role and to assume responsibility in the development, establishment, and maintenance of trails. Having a provincial strategic context within which stakeholders are able to present recreation values and needs at planning tables will result in better decisions and greater certainty for all resource users. A provincial trails strategy is necessary to coordinate the management of trails under multiple jurisdictions. The strategy must also establish a forum that brings together users and managers. In this way, users can voice directly to managers the needs, expectations, and limitations in outdoor recreation activities. With feedback from managers regarding the reality and feasibility of addressing concerns, hopefully possibilities can be explored and agreements can be reached.

Formation of a trails advisory council should be a fundamental aspect of a trails strategy. Such a council would play an important role in advising government on necessary changes to legislation and on a proposed trails act. A trails act should encompass many of the aspects from already existing or draft trails acts from other provinces. Other important tasks would include helping to determine priorities with respect to trails management, including the types of areas and sites that could fill gaps that exist in provision of recreation opportunities in the province.

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

In 1976, the Outdoor Recreation Council of BC (ORC) presented the Minister of Recreation and Tourism with a document entitled A Trails and Access Programme for British Columbia. This document outlines twenty-five issues and recommendations identified by the public such as:

- competition for landbase with other uses (e.g. resource extraction, infrastructure and residential development),
- lack of protection for trails outside of protected areas,
- lack of coordination between government agencies and recreation organisations/clubs or across jurisdictions to share management responsibilities,
- policies regarding public access on public land are inconsistent,
- need to identify new sources of funding,
- formal structure to encourage public participation in trail planning and management non-existent,
- need to increase trail supply,
- conflicts between activities need to be resolved, and
- lack of trail information.

Today, nearly a quarter of a century later, most of these issues remain outstanding and unresolved to some degree. This has been due largely to the lack of political will to address the issues. However, with changing patterns of land use and shifting economic bases for a number of communities, trails and the recreational and economic opportunities that they present are being viewed in a different light.

At the Premier's Economic Summit at 108 Mile Ranch in May 1999, a workshop was held on Tourism and Trails. One of the outcomes was that the province should consider the implications of a provincial trail system. The Resource Management Division (RMD) approached the Outdoor Recreation Council of BC to provide a demand (user) perspective of a trails strategy. Such a perspective should offer information including trail users' needs/desires, conflicts and barriers with which users are faced, and users' concerns and recommendations to mitigate problems. Using this important perspective, along with views from various resource agencies and other stakeholders, RMD will explore the implications of a provincial trails program for government consideration.

1.1 Scope and Study method

Based on preliminary research, concerns that a trail strategy should address include funding, conflicts for land base, lack of public consultation in the planning process for trails, and issues regarding trail establishment and maintenance. Compiling information found through research of past reports, surveys, and articles, this report will address the previously mentioned issues by documenting:

- trends in outdoor recreation (involving trail usage) in BC and possible implications of these trends,
- sources of conflicts amongst users; (e.g. expected trail experience of users versus actual trail experience; access; supply of trails (quality and quantity)),
- methods of developing and increasing trail opportunities (identify planning and management tools; investigating necessary changes to policy and legislation; identifying new trail opportunities), and
- suggestions and recommendations to address problems and concerns.

This report is intended to be an initial review of the concept of a provincial trail strategy from the users perspective. It is a research report and the suggestions and recommendations contained in the report have been developed by reviewing relevant literature and the results of the survey that formed part of the project. The report does not represent government policy, nor is it intended to be an official statement of the Outdoor Recreation Council of BC.

It is hoped that the report will stimulate discussion amongst user groups and with other land users so that the issues identified here will get broader discussion and benefit from further input. Additionally, while this report is largely focussed on land-based activities, ORC and RMD both recognise that many water-based activities would also benefit from a trail strategy. Comments on
Tourism and outdoor recreation are closely linked in British Columbia. The Super Natural marketing image of BC is based heavily on outdoor recreation resources and activities. However, outdoor recreation is sometimes overlooked as an important source of tourism in the province. Council of Tourism Associations (1994) asserts that "outdoor recreation should not be separated from tourism". However, in land use and other planning processes in BC, tourism and outdoor recreation are often considered separately.

There is tremendous potential for tourism as an economic benefit of trails (ACD 1997). Other economic benefits cited are (ACD 1997):

- encouragement of small business through trail development (e.g. hotels, restaurants, and stores specialising in equipment rental, repair, and supply),
- increased government tax revenues due to increased economic activity created by trails,
- increased direct and indirect business and employment opportunities, and
- increased real estate property value.

A report done by Reid et al. (1995) found that about 410 000 BC residents, representing approximately 16% of the adult population, embarked on a wilderness recreation trip. These recreationists spent $309 million (1992 dollars), mostly on transportation, food and beverages, and special equipment. The report concluded that the economic value of wilderness in BC in 1992 was between $192 million and $385 million.

A report released by Tourism BC (1998), found that travel occurred during all seasons. Land-based recreation (hiking, backpacking, wilderness exploring, and biking) lasted between 5 and 12 days, and land-based recreationists spent between $34 and $65 per day. Marine-based recreation (canoeing and kayaking) was undertaken for between 6 and 13 days. Canoers and kayakers spent between $41 and $67 per day.

It is obvious that recreation, and more specifically, recreation carried out on trails, is an important source of income to the province. Consideration of a provincial trails strategy must include both tourism and outdoor recreation interests.

Peepre and Associates (1993) predict the following trends will affect recreation settings and experiences for both terrestrial and water-based activities:

- increased development and resource extraction in wilderness areas,
- decreased public access to recreation sites, especially near urban centres and travel corridors,
- concentrated numbers of users (i.e. over-crowding), especially near urban centres, and
- increased mechanised/motorised access and use to recreation areas, causing decrease of areas available for non-mechanised/motorised recreationists.

Their report also proposes that continued lack of planning might lead to protected areas becoming the only areas available to non-mechanised/motorised recreationists.
Residents surveyed as part of a report analysing outdoor recreation demand in the Lower Mainland (Rethink Group and Praxis Pacific 1994) confirmed Peepe and Associates' findings. Respondents viewed the main constraint on participating in outdoor recreation activities to be over-crowding. According to public opinion expressed in the survey, the setting suffering from shortest supply is urban forest, followed by greenways and freshwater lakes and beaches.

The Greater Vancouver Regional District (GVRD) Major Parks Plan Study (1995) reports that 75% of recreationists living in the Lower Mainland participate in activities close to home. Activities with high growth rate are trail-related activities that include walking, trail biking, and day hiking. With such a large percentage of the population using trails, it is no wonder that over-crowding in urban centres is becoming a problem. In addition, the GVRD Study found that the growth rate of some activities may be limited by number of trails, over-crowding, and conflicts between users. The study recognised that a high priority for local residents is the need to expand walking, jogging, cycling, and hiking trails and completion of a regional trail system.

Reasons suggested by Wilkinson (n.d.) for the increased demand for recreation sites closer to urban centres include:

- greater awareness of the real costs of individual vehicle use (e.g. fuel, pollution) to travel to a recreation site, resulting in desire to recreate closer to home,
- inability for a working couple to afford to take time off or coordinate vacation time for extended periods (i.e. two weeks or more) and so will demand weekend trips closer to home, and
- business travellers tending to extend trips over weekends and only have time for near-urban recreation experience.

As near-urban and urban areas are becoming increasingly important sites of recreation, over-crowding is becoming a problem. The province may wish to consider the implications of establishing and maintaining links between trails found on provincial land and urban trails, which may help to alleviate pressure.

4.0 CONFLICTS

Based on trend information, increasing trail opportunities should be a priority for action in order to ease the crowding that leads to conflicts. Conflicts for the recreational land base occur with commercial use, with resource use, and with other human development. This is a major component of the need to expand the trail system in the province. This section will examine why conflicts occur and lend some suggestions on how to mitigate or allay confrontations.

4.1 Conflicts between recreationists

Conflicts mainly occur due to recreationists seeking different experiences derived from personal, environmental and social components (Wall 1989). Satisfaction from recreating is a function of perception and expectation (Jackson 1989). In addition, the presence, number and behaviour of others encountered during recreation influence the quality of wilderness recreation experience (Jackson 1989).

Compatibility, safety, and user expectation need to be considered in order to decrease conflicts. The most commonly recognized conflict that exists is motorised versus non-motorised users. Kulla (1991) lists several actions that cause conflict and bad feelings between mountain bikers and other users, which would also apply to confrontational experiences between other recreationists. These include:

- excessive speed and thoughtlessness,
- resentment towards users who are faster or more mechanised than the offended party,
- disturbing the peace and solitude that the offended party was expecting, and
- damage to the resource (e.g. causing erosion, ruts, and crushed vegetation) leading to the alienation of other users.

Often times, mountain bikers carry the brunt of complaints on trails, as they are seen as the newcomers to the trails, thus disrupting established trail-use patterns (Kulla 1991; ORC 1990).
However, complete denial of access to a single user group does not address the problem. Rather, the problem may be compounded, as exemplified in New Jersey, where a total ban on mountain biking in parks resulted in concentrated use in another area, leading to more intense conflicts. Horseback riders and mountain bikers often have the same interaction with hikers, who perceive the former to have a detrimental impact on the environment. This is despite the fact that many trails that hikers currently use are former horse trails (ORC 1990). The problems faced by mountain bikers likely extend to other mechanised/motorised groups.

As Kulla (1991) pointed out, perceived environmental degradation can alienate users. Quality of environment, and even perception of quality, are further sources of conflict. Several reports claim that activities such as most non-consumptive activities (generally non-mechanised activities) benefit from some form of protected area designation. Activities such as snowmobiling, mountain biking, and boating, although they do not require as stringent protection of landscape, do rely on protection of access (Peepre and Associates 1993, Balmer 1993b). However, with increased participation rates, the impact on parks may become quite heavy. This will cause displacement to areas outside of protection, possibly imparting further damage.

4.1.1 Suggested solutions

Peepre and Associates (1993) believe that managers must recognise the need to improve recreation resources outside of protected areas. Managers will have to determine what are the required strategies to ensure that such resources continue to provide high quality of recreation settings and whether or not local resource use planning processes are sufficient to address recreation needs outside of protected areas. ICOR (1991) places importance on cooperation and consultation with user groups. Managers need to be familiar with the needs, expectations, and limitation of different types of travel. Knowledge of the constraints of trail facilities and trails’ environment is necessary to make sound decisions. Users also have the responsibility to communicate their needs to managers. According to Moore (1994), managers informed of public needs will be able to:

- determine the types of experiences different types of users are seeking (e.g. are the users of a particular park more interested in solitude than in others areas?),
- know what each group considers inappropriate behaviour in various situations,
- determine if individuals and groups experiencing conflict perceive trail areas and purposes of these areas differently,
- determine the relationship between satisfaction and density of other users (i.e. is behaviour of other users more important than absolute numbers?),
- determine who are the most conflict-sensitive users and what makes them different from others,
- determine what is happening to most conflict-sensitive users (e.g. displaced, staying),
- know what are the most effective ways of influencing attitudes and behaviours (e.g. brochures, signage), and
- know what are barriers to users becoming involved in trail clubs and coalitions and what are the best ways to involve the public in long-term, constructive trail efforts.

Important questions that trail planners should consider based on users demands/concerns as stated in the Washington State Trails Plan (ICOR 1991) include:

- Is access year round or seasonal?
- Are trails conveniently located and continuous with other trails?
- Is the number of trails increasing at a rate proportionate to the increase in population?
- Are trails accessible via transportation from urban and rural settings?
- Is access over-developed, thus leading to over-use?
- Are more trail opportunities being offered in order to disperse use? Are such opportunities on lesser-known trails being publicised?

Balmer (1993b) proposes that management priority should be placed on activities that require a protected area. Such areas are where there exists abundance of wildlife, greatest biodiversity and uniqueness for education, and spectacular scenery and manageable corridors. Specific areas of focus suggested by Balmer include the best marine, lake and river corridors to cater to the growing boating market and the best sites for rock climbing and mountaineering.

Generally, in order to resolve issues regarding conflict between user groups, which includes amongst recreation groups, commercial versus private recreationists, and between recreationists and resource managers, stakeholder discussions during the early stages of planning are imperative. However, it is also necessary that such a forum is made possible and that each stakeholder is made aware that such a process exists.
During the Mountain Biking Symposium (ORC 1990), suggestions were brought forward regarding how to manage mountain biking. However, the recommendations could serve well for all recreation activities. One of the most important recommendations was that additional research on volumes of use, destinations, needs and desires of recreationists is required. In addition, standards for construction of trails for different activities should be established. A whole range of experiences and opportunities for all types of activities needs to be ensured. A trail inventory may also be helpful in "assigning" areas for activities. Recreationists in all activities should have representatives who can facilitate and participate in research, planning, management and education on behalf of fellow recreationists. Trail closures to specific uses should be based on clear and specific closure standards, and closures must be able to be enforced with regulations. While voluntary restrictions on use through local agreements are preferable, it is important to provide regulatory back-up if necessary. Finally, user-wide Codes of Conduct which would guide safe and courteous conduct on trails should be created and promoted.

The Washington State Trails Plan (ICOR 1991) brings forth several conclusions regarding managing for multiple uses. Generally, non-motorised recreationists object to motorised recreationists using the same trail. Motorised recreationists often see multiple-use trails as their only options. However, design of a multi-use trail may lead to diminished experience for other users. For example, concrete blocks used to reduce the wear by wheeled vehicles are uncomfortable for walking and discourage hikers. For this reason, the Plan suggested that on heavy-use trails, a generic multi-use management approach was not suitable. Rather, such a trail should be managed with a primary objective in mind, and once this is determined, subsequent, compatible uses can be ascertained and accommodated.

Moore (1994) also believes that extensive data gathering is necessary during the planning stage. Information gathered should include trail use volume, patterns, and trends. His work details twelve principles for minimising conflicts on multiple-use trails. These include:

- recognise conflict as goal interference,
- provide adequate trail opportunities - offer adequate trail mileage and provide opportunities for a variety of trail experiences,
- minimise number of conflicts in problem areas by reducing number of user contacts, especially at trail heads and congested areas; disperse use and provide separate trails (considering environmental impact and lost opportunities for positive interactions),
- involve users as early as possible, best to start during planning and design stage with involvement of prospective users,
- understand user needs (e.g. motivation, desired experience, norms, setting preference),
- identify actual sources of conflict - get beyond emotions and stereotypes, get to the root,
- work with affected users to reach mutually agreeable solutions,
- promote trail etiquette,
- encourage positive interaction among different users - providing positive interactions both on and off trail helps break down barriers and stereotypes, build understanding, good will and cooperation; strategies may include "user swaps", joint trail-building or maintenance projects, forming trail advisor councils,
- favour "light-handed management",
- plan and act locally - address issues regarding multi-use trails at local level; local action equals local involvement, and
- monitor progress.

As mentioned previously, a primary source of conflict is many individuals or groups are competing for a limited, common resource. In some cases, recreation demand exceeds supply. In Balmer's study (1993b) on trends in outdoor recreation, he cited a study in the US looking at where a supply crisis can be anticipated. It was found that the following activities where trails are used would face the greatest threat of shortages:

- land-based activities: day hiking, wildlife observation, and backpacking,
- water-based activities such as canoeing and kayaking, and
- snow and ice-based activities such as cross-country skiing.

Balmer (1993a), Moore (1994), and ORC (1990) emphasise the importance of suppling an adequate, full-range of experiences in a variety of settings, and even duplicating experiences, in order to "side-track" a portion of users and to diffuse impact. Again, in order to assess these, the different types of experiences that recreationists seek need to be determined. The trails that recreationists use in order to find these experiences need to be mapped out. Peepre and Associates (1993) propose a number of questions that need to be addressed in order to meet the diverse needs of recreationists. These include:

- is there a balance between opportunities for quiet solitude in wilderness areas and more
accessible natural sites suitable for a wide range of activities?

- is there sufficient duplication for recreation settings in sensitive environments to disperse use and reduce impacts of future growth in demand?
- what gaps exist in the provision of recreation opportunities in the region?

Naturally, recreationists themselves can change their behaviour to minimise conflict. Courtesy is of utmost importance in order to foster positive relations between user groups. This would include being courteous in gestures and conversation with other users (Kulla 1991, ORC 1990). Courteous behaviour is not a guarantee of compatibility (ICOR 1991). Alberta TrailNet is preparing to develop a code of conduct in consultation with landowners to define respectful trail users' behaviour near or on private property. This code would also help to alleviate user conflicts (Gardner and Gordon 1998).

Recreationists often may not realise that despite competing for the same resource, they can actually band together and form an alliance. For example, if bikers are banned from a trail due to perceived impact on trails, chances are that equestrian riders may also be banned. Therefore, the two groups could work together to prevent the loss of access. Moreover, cooperation between clubs should be encouraged. For example, hiking, equestrian, and biking clubs can work together on trail clean up. Everybody could help to clean up, and bikers and horseback riders could pack out the garbage.

The key instruments in resolving conflicts between users are to encourage user participation in the planning stage, provide a full range of experiences, foster user collaboration with each other, and promote Codes of Conduct.

4.2 Conflict with commercial use

Commercial outdoor recreation can be defined as outdoor recreation activities undertaken on a fee-for-service basis. Participants in commercial outdoor recreation are not paying for access to land or opportunities, but rather for the services provided by a commercial operator to assist with their participation in outdoor recreation activities. Tourism involving commercial outdoor recreation, from hiking to heli-skiing is "growing at a rate unequalled by any other segment of the economy" (BC Ministry of Environment, Lands and Parks (MELP) 1995). Commercially available activities include snow-cat skiing, heli-hiking, snowmobiling, motor biking, ATV or jet boat tours, ski-touring, cross-country skiing, trail riding, horseback tours, mountain biking, nature observation, photography, wildlife viewing tours, mountaineering, river rafting, canoeing, and kayaking.

A study of commercial recreation potential in the Sea to Sky corridor documents major concerns of provincial park officials (BC MELP 1995). There is potential for a commercial operator holding a commercial recreation tenure to provide access inadvertently into parks, or affect public use on Crown land causing use to shift onto park lands. Informal barriers created in areas under tenure may result in exclusive commercial use of areas and discourage public recreational use of Crown land.

Under the Commercial Recreation policy in place in BC, several types of tenures can be issued to commercial recreation operators. While the policy states explicitly that most tenures do not allow the operator to exclude public recreationists from the tenure area, this is not always the reality on the land. When an operator invests time and energy and often money in an area, there is naturally a degree of possessiveness that becomes apparent, and public access is often seen as undesirable. The public feels strongly about maintaining free and unrestricted access to Crown-owned recreational lands. While there are various memoranda and staff guides setting out how agencies will address public access to recreation in making commercial recreation decisions, concerns continue to exist. Recreational users have seen increasing, not decreasing, numbers of areas where conflicts exist with commercial users.

There is worry that recreational carrying capacity and environmental impact of commercial operators will be overlooked. The 1995 study recommends that leases not be granted in areas that receive high recreation use or in areas that provide primary access to areas used for recreation by the general public. As more commercial recreation tenures are approved, the need to coordinate trails across jurisdictions will become more urgent. For example, a strategy to manage a trail that begins in a municipality and crosses into an area under a commercial recreation tenure will have to be developed.

From the non-commercial users' perspective, non-mechanised and some mechanised users strongly support the designation of non-motorised zones. Most non-motorized recreationists have concerns regarding noise and visual impacts, environmental impacts on alpine areas (particularly during summer), conflicts with wildlife, safety, increasing access to alpine areas, and displacement of non-mechanised users.
Minimal environmental impact is an imperative for a successful venture in ecotourism, another form of commercial use of the outdoors that is also becoming increasingly popular. An important motivator for taking an ecotourism vacation is to experience scenery and/or nature. Consumers prefer ecotours that show environmental and social responsibility (HLA Consultants and ARA Consulting Group 1995).

4.2 Suggested solutions

Managing commercial recreation use in areas of high public use will require public consultation processes designed specifically to address these uses. Inventory of areas traditionally used by the public for various activities should be undertaken (BC MELP 1995). While recreational user inventories are being compiled as part of the LRMP processes, they are not kept up to date after the processes are completed. Maintaining these inventories, as well as generating similar information for areas of high use not yet covered by an LRMP process would help to ensure adequate consideration of public recreation.

4.3 Conflict with resource extraction

Historically, recreation was overlooked in US Forest Service harvest management, resulting in public perception that trails received low priority in management decisions (ICOR 1991). The Washington State Trails Plan (ICOR 1991) states that timber and other resource management should not dictate the fate of trails, rather that trails should guide timber management decisions. The Forest Service has now established a Forest Recreation Strategy, creating a framework that allows recreation managers the ability to compete for often limited resources (ICOR 1991). USFS policy is to replace trails disrupted by timber harvest. The Mt. Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest (1989) policy reads "Trails interrupted by logging or road construction will be restored or substitute trails provided so that mileage of trails in given area is not diminished".

A number of motorised recreation groups have claimed that road deactivation can cause displacement of users such as snowmobilers, off-road motorcycling, and four wheel driving. These groups have suggested that a dual "trail-road" designation be assigned to logging roads used by recreationists.

The vast majority of trails that are located outside of protected areas do not have any status or designation and are not afforded any protection (ORC 1996, ORC 1976). While there is provision through the Forest Practices Code Act of BC to establish recreational trails with objectives that are legally binding on forest operational plans, the rate of such designations has been considerably slower than recreationists had hoped would occur. There are also several trails designated under the Heritage Conservation Act. However, maintaining the recreational values of even heritage trails requires continued vigilance by recreationists.

As discussed above, satisfaction is a function of experience. Experience of many activities is a function of recreating in areas that are undisturbed, where solitude and the natural environment are often preserved. Such activities include most non-mechanised activities, backcountry hiking and skiing, and mountaineering (Peepre and Associates 1993, Balmer 1993b). As Peepre and Associates (1993) predict, increasing resource use will encroach upon wilderness areas. Any activities such as road deactivation, timber harvesting, and mining may disrupt trail usage and negatively affect the trail experience.

4.3.1 Suggested solutions

In most regions of BC, Land and Resource Management Planning processes (LRMPs) are proceeding. These are strategic planning processes at which all interests have the opportunity to be at the negotiating table. Through land use zoning and management direction, many user conflicts can be alleviated. Better use could be made of the opportunities for conflict resolution at LRMPs by competing interests. In addition, conflict resolution could be an explicit function of the implementation and monitoring phase of the LRMP.

The Water Use Planning (WUP) process was created in 1996 in order to include changing public values and environmental needs in the management of provincial water resources (BC Hydro 1999). The WUP process was developed to provide a framework within which water resource benefits can be shared between a variety of stakeholders, representing cultural, economic, environmental, safety, and social interests. Recreational interests also have a stake at the discussion table. The WUP consultation process allows participants to articulate their interests in water management, listen to and learn about other interests, develop an information base for discussion and review, explore the implication of a range of operating alternatives, and seek compromises across water uses. This
British Columbia Trans Canada Trail

process is useful to ensure that all interests are considered in water management planning. This model provides similar opportunities to LRMP for land-based recreation, and could provide useful input to land-based planning sessions.

BC Hydro and the BC Ministry of Forests (1991) have both completed recreation opportunity surveys of the lands on which they operate. This is essential in planning for all uses of the resource in which industry and other stakeholders have interests. However, a plan needs to be developed in order to account for lands that are not covered by these jurisdictions. Following this, there needs to be coordination of management for trails that are under multiple jurisdictions.

4.4 Conflict with conservation initiatives

In 1993, a province-wide survey was administered on behalf of several branches within the Ministry of Forests (MoF) and MELP to determine public opinion about wilderness (BC MoF and MELP 1995). Respondents felt that consumptive and extractive activities and motorised recreation are not acceptable in wilderness areas. The use of all-terrain vehicles (ATVs) was considered unacceptable by fifty-four percent of respondents. Eighty percent surveyed felt it was important to have designated wilderness as a place to recreate. Thirty-four percent of respondents claimed that they were concerned that access for recreation would be affected by designated wilderness due to limited road access. The majority considered non-motorised, non-consumptive uses, such as backpacking, river rafting/canoeing, wildlife viewing, and horseback riding acceptable.

60% of respondents felt that the five percent of protected areas in the province at the time of survey was inadequate. British Columbians would be willing to pay between $108 and $130 per annum in order to double the amount of designated wilderness, from five to ten percent (Reid et al. 1995).

A more significant conclusion from the study found that although recreation and tourism are considered valuable, non-recreational benefits of wilderness are more important. Protection of wildlife, preservation of representative natural areas, and places of scenic study were named as the primary benefits of designated wilderness.

Several sources maintain that the general complaint conservationists hold regarding recreation activities are that continuous heavy usage can degrade land, air, and scenic values and can disturb fauna (Wilkinson n.d., Cordell et al. 1990). This applies to all types of outdoor recreation activities, from hiking or mountaineering, to mechanised and motorised activities. There is much support to prioritise conservation over recreation. It is important to preserve naturalness and wilderness areas now, while these areas still exist in pristine condition. Once this condition has been altered, it cannot be restored (Balmer 1993a). The Protected Areas Strategy also places priority on conservation (Province of BC 1994), stating:

"recreation activities, facilities, and services in protected areas must be compatible with the area's objectives and the long-term protection of each area's ecological viability and integrity, while enhancing the public's experience of natural and cultural heritage of the province."

This prioritisation will likely limit the availability of land for activities considered incompatible with the strategy. It is probable that non-protected areas, such as Ministry of Forests lands, will feel the pressure of activities displaced from protected areas due to conservation concerns (Balmer 1993a and ICOR 1990).

4.4.1 Suggested solutions

The need will arise to identify all important recreation resources outside protected areas, strategies required to ensure these resources continue to provide high quality recreation settings, and ensuring that existing local resource use planning processes are sufficient to address recreation needs outside protected areas (Peepre and Associates 1993).

4.5 Resolving conflicts

There is no simple, all-inclusive formula for resolving conflicts. However, some of the common methods of minimising and working towards resolving conflicts are stakeholder participation during the planning process, cross-jurisdictional cooperation, and inventory and mapping of recreation activities.
As planning becomes less sectoral and more seamless, the source of conflicts will likely decrease. Solutions developed at the local level often have the greatest success at avoiding or minimising conflicts. However, implementation of these measures requires considerable effort and cooperation from industry, governments, and other resource users. It must also be remembered that resolving conflicts between motorised and non-motorised recreational users (for example) may not resolve conflicts between recreationists and other resource users such as the logging industry.

As resource and user demands on the land base continue to increase, conflicts will also continue to occur. A strategic context within which to create local solutions will aid in reducing conflicts regarding recreational trails.

5.0 FUNDING

Lack of funding for outdoor recreation in general, and trails in particular, is considered to be the greatest barrier to ensuring that opportunities continue to exist and that the land is being managed in a way that will benefit provincial residents (ORC 1994). Although increased amounts of money are being allocated to outdoor recreation management, the increase is not proportionate to the increased demand. This has had a negative effect on recreation services in many ways, including closure of recreation sites on both forest land and in protected areas, environmental damage, and deterioration due to lack of maintenance of recreation facilities. Suggested sources of funding are taxes, fees, user charges, grants from higher levels of government or foundations, concessions, special funds, and donations of land and money from the private sector. User fees, volunteers, and alliances are considered the most plausible short-term solutions. However, in order to implement each of the solutions, many issues must be addressed. Some of these are discussed below.

The GVRD Major Parks Plan (1995) claims that there is increasing public support for selective user fees, fund-raising, and joint ventures to expand recreation services. GVRD suggested that consultation with stakeholders be conducted in order to determine the type and level of services appropriate for user fees, partnerships, and business ventures. Also, GVRD supports the idea of park agencies pursuing joint ventures with the private sector to provide expanded recreation services that are not part of basic public amenities.

A survey, Outdoor Recreation Demand in the Lower Mainland (Rethink Group and Praxis Pacific 1994) reports that conducting major fund raising campaigns (e.g. land trust, concert) and charging entrance fee for organised special events were largely acceptable to the public. Providing special services (food and beverages), renting land on an interim basis (filming, private camps), selling annual passes to some areas, and charging admission fees to some areas were somewhat acceptable. Unfavourable options included encouraging commercial development, installing parking meters in some areas, and increasing taxes.

Several funding challenges were identified at a workshop addressing conversion of railways to trails, many which would apply to a general trail strategy (ORC 1996). These included finding funds for acquisition, assessment of railbed condition and safety requirements, maintenance and repairs, research and data collection, and planning and management. Possible sources of funding suggested were:

- federal and provincial government infrastructure programs (rail trails are transportation routes),
- Forest Renewal BC,
- Trans Canada Trail Foundation (specifically for Trans Canada Trail),
- partnerships, and
- banks (e.g. TD-Canada Trust is a sponsor of the Trans Canada Trail).

Suggested tactics mentioned were:

- form coalitions between government, corporations and communities to raise funds for acquisition,
- promote converted railways that will become part of the Trans Canada Trail,
- solicit people and funders for in-kind contributions (e.g. supplies and equipment),
- explore creative financing for purchase of abandoned rights of way (e.g. lease to own agreement),
- urge government for leadership in facilitating coordination, vision and securing integrity of
abandoned rights-of-way, and
● consider user fees for funding for maintenance, repairs and improvements.

Gardner and Gordon (1998) outline several other funding options for Alberta's Wild Rose Trail System. Options considered within their document include incorporating trails into existing park systems, implementing an Adopt-A-Kilometre program, using prison labour or community groups, and soliciting corporate sponsors. Other sources for funding for maintenance included:

● municipal tax dollars, similar to road maintenance,
● ad hoc donations, fund raising projects, and user fees, similar to rural sports facilities,
● province-wide fund raising projects (e.g. trail lottery),
● Department of Transportation funding (e.g. 1% of highway budget),
● formal sponsorship by larger organisations (e.g. recreation groups or companies),
● carbon credits from energy-intensive industries (or cities),
● trail use permit: local or provincial, commercial or by recreation association,
● voluntary trail development contribution,
● support from those who indirectly benefit (e.g. B&Bs, equipment rental companies), and
● surcharge paid when purchasing trail-related equipment (e.g. $1 per bicycle).

Gardner and Gordon (1998) emphasise that in order for any of the above to be feasible, user education will be necessary. Some of the options mentioned will be examined in the next section.

5.1 Support from users

Fees are often the primary source of financial support from users. Fees must be considered carefully and non-fee opportunities must remain available to all members of society. User fees generally should be applied to enhanced service or facility options, and not to basic access.

In order for user fees to be an effective fundraising tool, education is needed prior to implementation. Users need to know where fees are going and why they are necessary. Success will depend on the ability of managers to demonstrate the benefits (e.g. improved and continued recreation quality) resulting from the fees (Gardner and Gordon 1998). Wilkinson (n.d.) believes that although recreation activities may not change, recreationists' behavioural changes may lead to acceptance of quotas to regulate volume of use and limit negative environmental impacts.

The Ministry of Forests found that fifty-three percent of respondents to their survey felt that it was important for Forest Service sites to be free of fees. However, fifty-four percent stated that they would likely continue to use sites if a small user fee were implemented (1991).

In order for user fees to be an effective form of funding, monies must be returned to the agency, and preferably to the facility or site, that collected them. In the past, user fees have not returned to the programs or facilities from which they came. Rather, this money has gone into a general revenue fund and been re-allocated according to provincial or agency budgeting priorities. One negative consequence of user fees may be displacement of some recreationists. However, people are willing to pay for a service and even willing to pay more for a service, so long as the results are tangible (ORC 1994).

The BC Snowmobile Federation proposed several sources of current and potential funding for public trail systems, facilities, and alpine riding areas. Currently in the province, trail passes and club memberships are methods in which users pay for the use of trails. Additionally, Forest Renewal BC monies are directed towards multi-use trail development and interpretative services, and BC 21 provides funding for capital projects that also benefit communities. Fundraisers and many volunteers are the other sources of support for snowmobilers. BCSF suggests implementation of mandatory annual registration of snowmobiles. The Federation would then like to see fifty-percent of this fee be returned to the Federation for distribution back to clubs for trail enhancement. A mandatory trail pass for snowmobiling on managed trail systems could also generate income. It is estimated that BC snowmobilers spend in excess of $1.4 million on gas tax alone. The Federation has suggested that these funds should be returned to snowmobilers to allow for trail construction, similar to the way that a portion of gas taxes are currently re-distributed to maintain highways.

A proposed trail act in Alberta suggests an idea similar to that of the BCSF, whereby an estimated amount of government revenue from gasoline taxes consumed by recreational vehicles would be transferred to a Trail Development Fund. This fund would be used to support the development and maintenance of trails. Additionally, some groups have suggested setting up a fund where money could be collected from outdoor equipment sales. For example, one dollar from each bicycle purchase would go into the Trail Development Fund. This was also proposed in Quebec, where a potential one
British Columbia Trans Canada Trail

million dollars could be generated. In Alberta, this total would be several hundred thousand dollars. A charitable organisation would be responsible for overseeing the equitable distribution of funds received (Gardner 1999).

Volunteer labour provided by recreationists is a valuable form of user support that is not always recognised. To increase effectiveness of the volunteer workforce, volunteers need more support from outdoor recreation agencies. Building community ties is an important product from encouraging and supporting volunteers (ORC 1994).

5.2 Alliances with industry and corporations

Alliances with industry and between agencies should be further explored. In 1996, BC Parks conducted a study to assess the public's views on corporate sponsorship in parks. Eighty-nine percent of respondents felt that it was acceptable to accept monies, materials or supplies from private companies for specific projects. Providing or maintaining facilities for outdoor recreation was cited to be the most acceptable activity to receive funding. Outdoor recreation suppliers and photographic suppliers would be the most appropriate sponsors, while tobacco companies might be considered less appropriate.

In 1999, the computer company, Compaq, signed a one million dollar agreement with Go For Green to create TrailPAQ, a Canadian trails website that will have information on heritage trails, hiking trails, national trails, and local trails. The website will support community-based trail initiatives, share valuable trail resources amongst trail builders, inform Canadians about trails throughout their country, and promote Canada's wealth of trails to people around the world. In addition to the website, this ten-year agreement will also provide funding for municipalities and community trail groups towards the purchase and conversion of abandoned railway lines into trails.

As the Compaq / Go for Green example shows, this is an area that could and should be further investigated. Again, user input is vital and necessary to the success of these agreements.

6.0 PRIORITIES TOWARDS A TRAIL STRATEGY

This section examines the necessary actions that managers will have to take to develop an effective trail strategy.

6.1 Management priorities

A BC trail strategy should outline the framework and direction that would guide trail development. The priority articles in a BC trail strategy are:

- principles, goals and strategic policies which define the province's interest in trails,
- definition of broad provincial priority areas for trails and how to treat these areas within the regional and subregional planning processes,
- framework for developing regional and subregional plans for trails,
- direction for coordinating planning initiatives and inter-relationship of trail plans with other resource use plans, and
- direction for planning approval and appeal process.

Formation of a task force comprised of various government departments has been identified as an important aspect of an effective trail program (ACD 1997). Such a task force would advise on and facilitate regional trail development. Furthermore, a staff member within a designated department should oversee and monitor trail development. The provincial government, through this task force and with strategic direction, should also support and encourage linkages and development of new and existing trails (Gardner and Gordon 1998).

Coordination and cooperation with regional and municipal governments should also be an explicit aim of a provincial trail strategy. GVRD (1995) sees several benefits in forging new partnerships and strategic alliances between government levels. These include integrated planning and management, reduction of duplication and overlap of jurisdictions and programs (which also reduces management costs), and improvement in consultation, consensus building and cooperation among management agencies. GVRD (1995) and the BC Ministry of Forests (1994) both acknowledge the need to
coordinate trail planning and development at the regional and provincial levels in order to improve connections and expand multi-use corridors. COTA (1994) and ORC (1976) have long recognized the need for coordination of activities between ministries and other agencies to ensure they are consistent with a land use strategy, and a future trail strategy for BC.

It would be helpful to many groups if a hierarchy of plans were required to clarify which plan takes precedence over others. A BC example would be to delineate the hierarchy between CORE regional plans, LRMPs, TSA planning, protected area plans, and others. Such a "map" will clarify for managers and recreation groups which agency they need to approach when seeking permits, enhanced resource management, and other information.

A number of groups have voiced concern that obtaining approval for trail planning/applications can take years. A trails strategy that encompassed planning approval and appeal process, as suggested above, would expedite trail application approval.

6.2 Supply and demand priorities

British Columbians place priority on protection of existing urban parks and creation of easily accessible small parks near urban areas (Peepre and Associates 1993). Linking urban and rural spaces, protecting trail and river corridors, creating more facilities to meet the recreation demand, and increasing emphasis on management of recreation in existing protected areas are other priority items. Furthermore, the public believes that the following broad goals should be given highest priority (Peepre and Associates 1993):

- maintaining existing facilities,
- acquiring land for recreation and conservation (including ocean beaches, urban forests and the backcountry),
- developing more facilities (e.g. walking and jogging trails in local parks, backcountry hiking trails),
- providing information (in the form of brochures and maps); and
- completing a regional trail system.

Balmer (1993b) provides a comprehensive list of recommendations on areas to focus on with respect to recreation within the BC Protected Areas Strategy framework. His recommendations would be pertinent to a provincial trail strategy. Priorities should include:

- activities that require a protected area,
- activities and/or areas where a supply crisis can be anticipated,
- activities that have a special appeal,
- protection of land in near urban areas,
- protection of opportunities for world class destination travel,
- plan for lands necessary to accommodate displaced demand or succession effect of the PAS, and
- protection of corridors.

To respond to recreation demand, GVRD (1995) identified several action priorities in its Major Parks Plan. For example, the Province and Regional Districts should expand facilities at existing major park and recreation sites to increase the capacity for trail activities such as walking, hiking, cycling, and cross-country skiing. Also, capital development priorities should be limited or resources redirected away from recreation activities expected to decline in popularity in the next decade. Those areas that are under threat and have been recommended for development should be secured before they are lost.

6.2.1 Rails to trails - new opportunities

Compaq's sponsorship to aid in the acquisition and conversion of railways to trails demonstrates that this is a valuable method of increasing trail opportunities. In Canada, approximately 3700 kilometres of railbed have been converted to trails. Approximately 7000 kilometres have been acquired but not converted, and within the next 3 years, an additional 1700 kilometres are expected to be abandoned and potentially available for conversion.

Many benefits ensue from conversion of railways to trails, including (ACD 1997, PTTF 1995, ORC 1992):

- provision of trails to a plethora of activities including walkers, joggers, cyclists, horseback
British Columbia Trans Canada Trail

riders, hikers, wheelchair recreationists, cross-country skiers, snowmobilers, off-road vehicles,
- provision of economic development opportunities by encouraging tourism,
- preservation of open space near urban areas,
- provision of access to natural areas by persons with physical limitations,
- preservation of heritage, and
- preservation of green space, flora, and habitat for wildlife.

In the United States and Canada, it is possible to place an abandoned right-of-way (ROW) into a land bank. Such a designation allows for the possibility that the ROW may be reactivated in the future, but can be utilised for alternate purposes, such as recreational trails, in the meanwhile. Rail-trails can also be used as underground right-of-way for other resources, such as fibre optics, gas transmission, water or other pipelines. In return for use of the land, a utility company can contribute in-kind services to the construction and maintenance of the rail-trail (ORC 1992).

6.2.1.1 The Galloping Goose example

The Galloping Goose trail, on Vancouver Island, touches 400 adjacent landowners, mostly residential, but also includes farmers, commercial businesses, private recreation areas, various industries, and forestry. The planning stage for the Galloping Goose Trail included public consultation through eleven public meetings and mailouts of six hundred questionnaires and newsletters. Concerns voiced from landowners included trespass, vandalism, deterioration of quality of life, deterioration of rural atmosphere, increased fire hazard, and use of trail by motorcycles. These concerns were addressed through postings, informing users to stay on the trail unless otherwise notified, and that venturing off the trail is trespass and could be subject to legal action. Facilities were also developed and located to encourage users to stay on the trail, and motorised vehicles and fires are prohibited.

In 1989, the land for the trail was designated as a land bank, and the Galloping Goose Trail became the first railway to be converted to trail in Canada. Tenure for the trail was granted for twenty-one years. This short-term tenure caused the Capital Regional District (CRD) to be hesitant to invest capital in developing the trail for recreational use. The trail required extensive upgrades, improvements, repair, and bridge construction. Among the CRD’s responsibilities in operating and maintaining the park are garbage pick up, trail and facility inspection and maintenance, brush clearing and grading, and repairing trail surface as required. A natural gas pipeline was buried under the trail. In return for the use of the land, the utility company contributed to rehabilitating and upgrading the trail.

6.2.2 Pursuing rail-trails

In 1992, the Outdoor Recreation Council of BC published Rails to Trails: Moving forward, a provincial strategy for converting abandoned railway lines to trails. In this document, many issues regarding the conversion of railways were addressed and many recommendations were made. In 1996, ORC held a follow-up workshop in Penticton. In the time between publishing the Rails to Trails document and the workshop, only a few advancements had occurred with respect to rail trails: three new rail trails (none of which were priorities identified in Rails to Trails) and a thirteen kilometre extension of the Galloping Goose Trail. The provincial government acquired three new sections of abandoned railway between 1992 and 1996, whereas seventeen sections were acquired between 1988 and 1992.

Several priorities were identified at the workshop. First, participants believed that abandoned sections should be acquired immediately by the government, as they will not be available for much longer. Second, the integrity of a continuous corridor is very important. Once it is interrupted, an invaluable recreation, tourism, and heritage resource is lost. Lastly, a provincial policy is needed to guide decision making about the use of abandoned rail rights-of-way that would cover the care and safety of railbeds until a final use has been decided.

Other priorities related to policy were identified at the workshop. The status of recreation is not clear in the Agriculture Land Reserve. This is particularly relevant to the Kettle Valley Railway that crosses several large sections of land in the ALR. In general, policies are required to address issues such as:

- management of railbeds by communities,
- maintenance and repairs to railbeds before long-term use is decided,
- priority uses,
- how abandoned ROW fit into other agency needs and mandates,
- abandonment and acquisition,
- desired end use for ROW,
- responsibilities for environmental protection and assessment, and
how land use planning processes should deal with such routes.

6.3 Requiring government action

There are many responsibilities which government can assume to improve the trail experience in BC. In addition to some government roles already discussed, changes to legislation and providing a forum within which trail users can aid in the planning process are some suggestions that are addressed below.

6.3.1 Legislative changes

Many of the changes to legislation that would have to occur would be specific to each activity. For example, the BC Snowmobile Federation has proposed some changes to legislation that apply only to snowmobilers. The Federation has approached Ministry of Highways to aid in changing legislation related to designated highway crossings. Snowmobilers would like to eliminate the need for RCMP road crossing permits currently required to cross a highway at designated points. There are also several changes to legislation affecting ATVs and licensing that snowmobilers are requesting.

Instances exist where changes to legislation would be advantageous for multiple user groups. For example, a dual road and trail designation of forestry roads managed by MoF would benefit many recreationists who currently use MoF lands. In addition, ORC (1990) called for formal recognition of trails under MoF jurisdiction to ensure that such trails are given protection from conflicting land uses and closures. Access to public land for recreational purposes, where recreation activities will not disrupt other activities, should be maintained. Some licencees deny access through illegal or inappropriate posting. Access should be recognised as a legitimate land use and should be taken into consideration in land management decisions (e.g. residential development, resource use).

6.3.2 Determining roles and responsibilities

The following table is presented as an example where roles and responsibilities were set out so that each group involved in trails was able to focus on its particular responsibility and knew who else to turn to for other roles. The table illustrates the division of responsibilities between the New Brunswick government and the NB Trails Council and local trail sponsors. This structure was used during the construction of Sentier NB Trail, a province-wide trail system.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Management functions</th>
<th>Provincial government</th>
<th>NB Trails Council Inc.</th>
<th>Local trail sponsors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Acquisition</td>
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<tr>
<td>Access</td>
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<td>Facilities</td>
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<td>Development funding</td>
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<td>Financial control</td>
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<td>Land use policy</td>
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<td>Fencing</td>
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<td>Leasing</td>
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<tr>
<td>Legislation</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
A local trail sponsor is comprised of various community groups responsible for a section of the Sentier NB Trail. Trail sponsors are responsible for identifying the route, supervising construction, and for maintenance during and after completion. This type of organisational structure could provide a framework for organising a trail strategy in British Columbia.

6.4 Forging a provincial trails act

Many of the recommendations from other jurisdictions are relevant to BC. Ontario Trails Council has released a discussion paper entitled “Toward a Provincial Recreational Trails Policy” (1999), and one of the points of discussion was the need for a trails act. The Provincial Trails Task Force (PTTF 1995) in New Brunswick recommended enactment of a trail act for NB that stipulated:

- limitation of land owner liability,
- recognition of a trail user's responsibility for his/her own actions, and
- ability to establish regulations.

The Sentier NB Trail has standard trail signage (design, fabrication, installation and maintenance) and a trail standards manual (planning, design, construction and maintenance of the trail). This manual includes trail design standards, general planning and design considerations, construction, operation and maintenance. Such standards have been suggested for BC and Alberta in order to ensure standard quality of maintenance should various jurisdictions take on responsibility for trail management (Gardner and Gordon 1998, ORC 1990). Alberta TrailNet is willing to provide trail maintenance training for volunteers in Alberta (Gardner and Gordon 1998), based on standards adopted province wide.
Alberta Community Development (1997) considers access to private lands and landowners' concerns regarding trespassing, vandalism, landowner and custodial liability, and definition of manager and maintenance custodian of a trail important issues to address in a potential trail strategy. In addition, a system of enforceable user guidelines should be in place to promote safe and responsible use of trails. Management options may include patrol on foot, horseback, bicycle or motorised trail vehicles which would also be used for maintenance. All of these suggestions are relevant to BC.

Alberta TrailNet (Gardner and Gordon 1998) has identified the key players in forming a provincial trail system. The same players would potentially play responsible roles in a trail strategy in British Columbia. The stakeholders who would be involved are all levels of government (representing municipalities, community development, environmental protection, agriculture, rural development, public works, supply and services, health, transportation and utilities, and justice), landowners, Alberta TrailNet (perhaps Trails BC or ORC in British Columbia), local trail sponsors, users, and citizens.

A trails act for Alberta, modelled after the Nova Scotia Trails Act of 1988, has been recently drafted (Gardner 1999) with the specific objectives to:

- designate trails on public land,
- establish trails on privately owned lands, with the prior consent of the owners of occupiers,
- reduce the liability of the owner of the occupier of privately owned lands where consent is given to designate a trail,
- establish and operate trails, either by Alberta Community Development or through agreement with persons, including municipalities, clubs, organisations and other such bodies,
- provide for effective management of trails and the regulation of trail user activities to ensure quality user experiences with minimal disturbance to adjacent landowners,
- ensure a stable source of funding for trail construction and maintenance, and
- enable the holding of land designated for trails until suitable management is arranged.

Among many other provisions, the proposed act would also enable regulations to:

- allow for orderly recreation on trails,
- provide standards for design, construction, length, width, surface type, maintenance, operation and administration of trails,
- provide guidelines for other organisations to make donations to the Trail Development Fund,
- prescribe fees which may be charged to trail users,
- providing for the collection of fees,
- providing for the enforcement of the Act and any rules and regulations made with respect to trails, and
- prescribing penalties ranging between fifty and one thousand dollars for offences.

British Columbia would stand to benefit greatly by adopting similar legislation as many of the concerns discussed in this report would be addressed.

### 7.0 MINI SURVEY

#### 7.1 Survey methodology

A survey was developed to assess many of the areas where information seemed deficient as suggested from various sources reviewed during the literary research portion of this study (See Appendix 1 for copy of survey). The aim of the survey was to obtain a sense of users' perspectives on the experiences that they seek, trail development and maintenance, trail management, and solutions to problems encountered. The survey was tested on several people prior to delivering to survey participants. Approximately 100 surveys were sent out to members of ORC member organisations, and also given to random clients at a local outdoor recreation equipment retailer. Thirty-five surveys were completed and returned.

#### 7.2 Results

The following are general findings that resulted from the survey with some specific comments as
appropriate.

7.2.1 General recreational interests

1. Most respondents said that it is easy to find information regarding trails. The information is generally obtained from club information, friends, and guidebooks.
2. About a quarter of the respondents stated that they felt information was lacking on distance or length of trail, difficulty of trail, approach and access, facilities available, and seasonal closures.
3. Respondents stated that they travel various distances from their homes (between ½ hour to more than three hours) to recreate, and that recreation can last anywhere from 1-2 hours up to a week.
4. People recreate in groups of all sizes, from solo to parties of more than six.

7.2.2 Trail experiences

1. From the survey results, no particular reason for recreating was predominant. All the reasons suggested were selected (i.e. exercise, escape from city, relax, for adventure or adrenaline rush, see scenic places, socialise, learn about natural environment).
2. Respondents who pursue mechanised/motorised activities (including biking, snowmobiling, motorboating, ATVing) prefer:
   - areas with low to moderate degree of motorised access or use,
   - some evidence of people and motorised use,
   - high degree of naturalness and/or some infrastructure in place, and
   - moderate to high opportunity to experience solitude.
3. Respondents pursuing non-motorised/non-mechanised activities prefer areas with:
   - limited or no accessibility by road,
   - little to some evidence of other people,
   - high degree of naturalness, and
   - high opportunity to experience solitude.
4. A large number of respondents did not feel the trails they used were overcrowded. Trails that are overcrowded are often activity specific (e.g. rock climbing and cross-country skiing). The degree to which users feel the trails they use are crowded also depends on where they are recreating. For example, the intrepid ski-tourer/ski-mountaineer, snowmobiler, or horseback rider who travels for days deep in the backcountry will not likely find his/her trail to be crowded. On the other hand, for the day or weekend recreationist, who does not have time to travel far from home, the trails closer to populated areas will be more likely to be crowded.
5. Recreationists participating in other recreational activities, commercial recreation, resource extraction, and human development were identified as the activities that conflicted most with recreation.
6. When conflicts occur, many respondents stated they go elsewhere where they feel they get the same quality of experience. Many also stated that they simply stay in the area and continue to recreate in the area with a diminished experience. Some respondents remarked that it depends on the situation. Recreationists who are seeking out other areas to gain the same quality of experience have stated that they have to travel further and further to avoid the source of conflict.
7. Respondents felt that they have ready access to recreation areas, but there exist limitations due to private land, resource use, road deactivation, conflicts with commercial recreation, and conflicts with other recreationists. The issue of access is likely user and area specific. For example, rock climbers feel that their access is being impeded by private land and resource use, whereas snowmobilers feel that their access is being restricted by road deactivation, commercial recreation, and other public recreationists.

7.2.3 Trail development and maintenance

1. Most respondents felt that volunteer organisations with some support from the land owner/manager (generally the government) should be responsible for maintenance of trails.
2. Infrastructure needed/desired depends on the setting as well as activity. However, priority/popular/necessary infrastructure is parking lots, outhouses, water, campsites, and distance signage. Determining priority for infrastructure will be necessary. If people are given a choice, they will tend to want/indicate a need for all types of infrastructure.
3. Current and potential sources of funding identified by respondents included volunteer labour, donations, user fees, government, industry, and corporate sponsorship. Again, this is activity-specific. Snowmobiles are highly in favour of user fees, whereas many other recreationists are not.
4. Nearly all outdoor recreation clubs/organisations participate to some degree in the process of trail planning and management. Of the few respondents who said their club did not, the
reasons were that they were not aware of opportunities, there did not have time, and/or they
did not have money.

7.2.4 Seeking solutions

1. There is strong support for zoning to separate incompatible user groups. There was a
suggestion that this should be done by mutual agreement.
2. There is also support for restriction of certain activities from protected areas, trail closures to
specific users, trail closures to all users for rehabilitation, safety, and fire; maintaining visual
quality; a trails act, a trails advisory council, and a trail registry. However, certain users have
expressed adamant opposition to restriction of trails, claiming that public land should be
accessible to all citizens.
3. Support for permits or quotas to limit trail use and fees or passes to fund trail construction
and maintenance is limited. This is likely to be activity specific; snowmobilers are highly in
favour of fees for their users, while many hikers and backpackers expressed objection to
Forest Service campground fees.
4. Many comments were received regarding suggested options to increase and/or improve the
amount and/or quality of trails for outdoor recreation activities. These included:
   - support for rail-trail conversion,
   - use of utility corridors,
   - expanding the trail system in existing altered areas (as opposed to encroaching upon
     still pristine areas),
   - promotion of cooperation between user groups,
   - recognising increase in recreation of all user groups,
   - providing support to trail builders,
   - using deactivated logging roads,
   - establishing more protected areas, and
   - demanding official government recognition of recreation.
5. Priorities and challenges indicated included:
   - securing support for volunteer groups/trail builders,
   - overcoming resistance from government,
   - overcoming recreationists’ resistance to recognise validity of other trail users,
   - accessing necessary funding,
   - creating users conflict resolution procedures,
   - ensuring that Crown land is open for all citizens,
   - not compromising the biology/ecology of an area while expanding trails, and
   - educating the public.
6. Effective methods of promoting trail etiquette highly favoured were brochures and signs.
   There was some support for volunteer trail patrol and uniformed officers and education.

7.2.5 Water trails/routes

1. Of the respondents, canoeing, ocean kayaking, motor boating, fishing, swimming, wildlife
viewing, and visiting heritage sites were the most popular water-based activities.
2. Road access, parking, launching sites, maps and charts, guidebooks, and natural scenery
were all important needs for these activities.
3. Although all the aspects named in the survey were identified by respondents as experience
enhancing qualities, the most popular were:
   - toilets at high use camp sites,
   - natural, near pristine scenery,
   - secluded beaches, and
   - uncrowded anchorages/campsites.
4. The majority of the respondents checked off nearly all qualities identified in the survey as
experience-diminishing. These included overcrowding, noise, air and water pollution, garbage,
industrial sites, inconsiderate fast boat operations, and visual degradation.
5. The willingness to pay user fees was difficult to assess due to the small portion of respondents
to this section of the survey. However, it seems that there may be an acceptance of paying a
seasonal, daily, or per use fee for improved facilities and/or services.

7.3 Limits of survey results

The intention of this mini-survey was not to sample a population large enough to conduct a statistical
analysis. Rather, the survey was conducted to obtain a sense of recreationists’ perceptions. The
number of users representing a single activity is not equal. Although a strong effort was made to
encourage all different user groups to participate in the survey, the activities represented by survey
participants do not reflect actual participation rates. The majority of survey participants are non-
motorised recreationists, but in absolute numbers, there is a large percentage of the population
taking part in mechanised/motorised recreation also. This problem is further complicated by the fact that one person may participate in several activities.

Many respondents stated that the survey was too long and somewhat confusing. It was difficult to design a survey that was applicable to the diversity of trail users that exist in the province. While the questions were kept as general as possible, the answers varied with each user group. It is not possible to do a statistical analysis of answers by activity for several reasons.

8.0 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

8.1 Provincial Trail Strategy Needed

The time is appropriate and the opportunity has been presented for major progress in the way that trails in British Columbia are planned, developed, managed and maintained. Major concerns that have been expressed include the fact that there is no systematic coordination in planning across jurisdictions and there is no forum through which multiple stakeholders, including managers and recreationists, can be brought together to discuss issues and participate in a wholistic planning process. A formal structure needs to be established within which users’ needs can be expressed and gaps and priorities can be identified. Once this is in place, many of the other concerns, such as resolving conflicts, increasing trail supply and sourcing funding can be addressed more effectively.

Perhaps the greatest challenge that users and managers are facing is coping with increasing demand. This either results in recreationists remaining in the same areas with a diminished quality of experience and often increased levels of conflict, or seeking out new areas to avoid the crowds and conflicts. However, the latter option is becoming more and more difficult and is often only the most intrepid recreationists who are capable and/or willing to travel far enough afield to avoid other users. There is a need for all users to recognise that there has been increase in recreation of all types and for an agreement to resolve conflicts and to work together to improve or maintain the quality of experience for all recreationists. Often with tight budgets, it is difficult for managers to find feasible options to increase the trail supply, while still maintaining a balance of all stakeholder interests.

There are some specific questions that urgently need to be examined by a trails task force and/or at a multi-stakeholder forum. Some users feel that multi-use trails are not an effective method of managing the land base. Many users feel that zoning is the only solution. Others feel this is unfair, that all citizens should have equal access, and that closure of trails to specific users is unjust. Is there a way that users could agree on specific areas that should be set aside as multi-use and other areas that are open to selected users? Would development of a conflict-resolution procedure and a code of conduct aid in resolving grievances and preventing conflicts? It may be helpful for each user group to share with others why they recreate, the experiences they seek when they recreate, and the types of activity and behaviour that is unacceptable from other user groups. Identification of feasible and acceptable options to increase the supply of trails, specific to each activity and area must be reviewed.

Identification of funding options will have to occur collaboratively, although solutions, again, may be user- and area-specific. Some argue that user fees are the only effective method of funding trail development and maintenance. Other recreationists argue that it is not acceptable for government to charge fees when there is a perception that taxes should pay for these facilities.

Users and managers alike will face major challenges seeing "eye to eye", or even agreeing to disagree. It will be quite a difficult task to convince each user group that others also have a valid claim interest in a particular area. It will be particularly complex to resolve the disparities between motorised and non-motorised users, as well as between recreationists and other land users. Resistance from user groups to participate in a multi-stakeholder process will have to be overcome - some users still feel that revealing the location of their trails will result in losing the access to the areas. Managers must also be present in order to understand the issues and help to resolve problems. Persuading all levels of government and relevant departments of government to participate actively also may be difficult.

A trail strategy developed with input from user groups will enable recreationists and government agencies to take on a more defined and strengthened role in the development, establishment, and maintenance of trails. Having a provincial strategic context within which stakeholders are able to present recreation values and needs at planning tables will result in better decisions and greater
certainty for all resource users. A provincial trails strategy is necessary to coordinate the management of trails under multiple jurisdictions. The strategy must also establish a forum that brings together users and managers. In this way, users can voice directly to managers the needs, expectations, and limitations in outdoor recreation activities. Managers can communicate their positions regarding the reality and feasibility of their tasks addressing concerns. In such a manner, possibilities can be explored and agreements can be reached.

8.2 Need for an Advisory Council

Should a provincial trail strategy be implemented, the government should 1) define principles, goals and policies regarding the province's interest in trails and 2) facilitate and support the formation of a task force or provincial trails advisory council. With the aid of a task force or trails advisory council, the government can:

- determine provincial priority areas for trails and how these areas should be regarded within regional and subregional planning processes,
- define procedures on how to coordinate planning initiatives, and
- facilitate a trails planning and approval/appeal process.

Formation of a trails advisory council should be a fundamental aspect of a trails strategy. The council would play an important role in determining necessary changes to legislation and to advise on a potential trails act. A trails act should encompass many of the aspects that are found in already existing trails acts or draft trails acts from other provinces. Other important tasks would include helping to determine priorities with respect to trails management. For example, what type of areas and which specific sites could fill gaps that exist in the provision of recreation opportunities in the province. A trails advisory council must be effective in promoting trails, have a good rapport with government agencies and with the general public.

8.2.1 Potential items for terms of reference for a trails advisory council

The Provincial Trails Advisory Council will study and prepare recommendations for a Provincial Trails Policy including guidelines and priorities for trail development.

Trail categories to be studied, after working definitions have been developed are:

- Trails within urban areas including private land.
- Trails through productive forest, range, and wild land.
- Trails in Regional, Provincial and National Parks, on Native Land, and on Crown land.
- Rivers, Lakes, and Coastlines.
- Historic Trails.

8.2.2 Objectives of a trails advisory council

The Provincial Trails Advisory Council, in cooperation with the designated agency and special technical committee, would:

- enlist the support of individuals, local, regional and provincial groups, industry and government agencies through meetings, seminars, conferences, etc., and utilise such information, ideas and suggestions in the preparation of policies,
- develop working definitions of trail categories (e.g. "historic", "wild", and "scenic" rivers) and trail management criteria (e.g. "visual" factors, corridor widths) for use within the programme,
- review and make recommendations on the development of trail inventories and research through government agencies, task force sub-committees, student work programmes, outdoor clubs, and others,
- investigate and make recommendations on legislative and jurisdictional matters on Crown, municipal and private land, including responsibilities for relocation of trails when disrupted by industrial, or other development,
- investigate and make recommendations on potential funding mechanisms to implement and
maintain a trails programme,

- establish provincial and regional trail priorities and suggest schedules for trail designation and development,
- investigate and make recommendations on the signing and marking of trails along highways and access roads, and
- develop trail design standards and construction guidelines for all types of trails, and

serve as an on-going representative at national, provincial, regional and local meetings, conferences, etc. relating to the Provincial Trails Programme.

8.2.3 Closing comments

Below are the recommendations that were made to the government in 1976 in the Outdoor Recreation Council's Trail and Access Programme for British Columbia report. Most of the recommendations are still valid. The Outdoor Recreation Council has been provided with yet another opportunity to give guidance and influence the future of the province's trails. Therefore, these valuable recommendations are being reiterated in this report as important action items for government and non-governmental organisations.

- Issue a policy statement announcing the intention of government to encourage the formation of a Trails Programme for BC.
- Designate a provincial government agency to direct the development of a Trails Programme.
- Establish a Provincial Trails Advisory Council to advise on the development of the Trails Programme. The Advisory Council should consist of participants from all stakeholders who have an interest in trails.
- Ask the Outdoor Recreation Council of BC to coordinate the work of the Advisory Council under the direction of the designated provincial agency.
- Request the formation of a technical committee of government and other experts as appropriate, drawn from the various departments affected by trail policies, to represent the views of their departments in interactions with the Trails Advisory Council.
- Ensure that a comprehensive Trails Inventory is started.

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APPENDIX 1 Survey

not available at this time

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