



In 1889, surveyor George Dawson documented a First Nations foot trail running from Nakusp to Summit Lake and along Bonanza Creek to Slocan Lake. During the 1890s, along much the same route, the CPR built the Nakusp & Slocan Railway to connect the booming silver mines around Sandon to the transport system on the Arrow Lakes. A century later, the now-abandoned rail route provides residents, recreational groups and visitors with opportunities to appreciate the scenery, history, wildlife and pristine nature of the area. The north and south ends of this rail trail are already designated and well-used public trails (Galena and Nakusp-Summit Lake trails). The Rosebery to Summit Lake section is well used but not yet officially designated as a public trail.

The Rosebery-Summit Lake Rail Trail is in need of attention. The trail bed has been deteriorating from unmanaged water flows, beaver activity, culvert failures, washouts, rutting from vehicle use in wet conditions, and bank sloughing. There is also increasing use by some adjacent landowners and notice from the province that it may consider selling lakefront property adjoining the trail, which could lead to a loss of continuity. The time is right to officially secure this rail trail for public use.

This document is a summary of a 20-page management plan proposal, prepared by a local volunteer steering committee. The goal is a trail management plan that will be broadly supported in the community. A poll of public support for this proposal will take place this month (June 2015). The full proposal is available in hard copy at various locations throughout the area and can also be viewed and downloaded, along with this summary and other information, at

roseberysummitrailtrail.wordpress.com

The Benefits of Community Trails

Trails, and rail trails in particular, are highly valued community assets throughout BC, including the north Slovan Valley, and are desirable destinations for an increasing number of trail users. The gentle grade of a rail trail provides active living opportunities for all skill and age levels. Established and well-maintained trails aid in the protection of the natural environment while retaining public access, and can have economic benefits through increased tourism revenues, business investment and property values, as well as many other social, environmental and cultural benefits.

Trail Description

The Rosebery-Summit Lake Rail Trail extends over 26 km, hugging lakeshores and creek sides along nearly its entire length, and offering beautiful Selkirk mountain scenery and a wide range of recreation options. Much of the trail passes through important year-round and seasonal habitat for a variety of mammals, birds, amphibians and other wildlife, including some rare species. The rail trail corridor also serves as a major cross-valley wildlife movement corridor for grizzly bears, wolverine and other species traveling between Valhalla and Goat Range Parks. Important wetland complexes along Bonanza Creek and at Bonanza Marsh and Summit Lake Marsh are areas of high biological diversity and provide other ecological services such as water filtration and downstream erosion reduction.

History and Use

Even before the track and tie removal, the trail was used for hiking, nature walks, wildlife and bird viewing, running, horseback riding, fishing, cross-country skiing, snowshoeing, and to access beaches along Slovan Lake. Most of these activities have increased significantly and others have developed, including mountain biking, occasional ATVing and dirt biking, and rare snowmobile use. Adjacent landowners occasionally use the trail for moving equipment and access to property. Local schools use the trail for educational purposes, and scientific research in the wetland areas is ongoing.

Trail users have undertaken informal volunteer maintenance, mainly brushing, and also bridging of a few small tributaries to Bonanza Creek. There are numerous abandoned creosoted railroad ties in small piles and individually along the rail trail, some in wetland and riparian areas. The trail has little infrastructure aside from a few culverts and small rustic bridges.

Community interest in securing the corridor for public recreational use and protection of its natural features has grown since the trail's acquisition by the province in 1990. In 2001 the Regional District of Central Kootenay (RDCK) commissioned a study and then resolved that a public agency should assume jurisdiction of the rail trail and continue to work with stakeholders. Direct input from local residents, including through the 2009 *Hills Community Recreation Survey* and public input to the *Official Community Plan for Slovan Lake North*, indicates a preference for minimal to moderate development of the rail trail while retaining its local character and protecting its high ecological values. It will also be important to address the concerns of adjacent landowners, including safety, signage, public access, parking, garbage/litter, noise and privacy, fish and wildlife issues, types of use and overuse.

Recreation Sites and Trails BC (RSTBC), a branch of the BC Ministry of Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Operations that already oversees most public trails in the Slovan Lake and adjacent areas, has indicated an interest in becoming the managing agency for the trail.

About this Management Plan Proposal

This management plan proposal has been prepared based on 15 years of reports, studies and public discussions, and consultations with local residents. The intent is to provide a framework that will: officially establish the Rosebery-Summit Lake Rail Trail as a recognized provincial recreational trail; protect and foster an appreciation for the trail's ecological and cultural values; provide safe and high quality recreational opportunities; recognize and support the pattern of established local trail uses; provide a suitable framework for public input; and limit development to what is necessary to meet these objectives.

This proposal is now being distributed for review and endorsement by the residents of RDCK Area H North (Enterprise Creek to Summit Lake). If this proposed plan is endorsed, RSTBC has indicated it will proceed with the interagency review required for official trail designation and will consult with the RDCK and local First Nations. With official trail designation, the local steering committee will oversee the establishment of a local registered non-profit Society that will partner with RSTBC and engage residents and user groups in stewarding the ongoing maintenance and development of the trail.

No special taxation will be sought for implementation of this plan, or for ongoing trail management, under the terms of this proposal.

Guiding Principles for Trail Use Recommendations

1. Protect the Ecology: The first priority of this management plan proposal is to maintain, protect, and restore where necessary the rail trail ecosystem. A biological feasibility study will assess the impacts of recreational use of the rail trail on plant, fish and other wildlife species, with suggestions on how to limit damage. Until the assessment is completed, the trail will be managed for known ecological and wildlife issues that will likely include seasonal limitations on trail use.

2. Protect Cultural and Historic Features: First Nations people were the first to use this route. A preliminary archaeological report mentions a First Nations house pit / cache site, and likely other sites will be discovered with a planned follow-up study. There are also remains of an old wagon road and remnants from the CPR.

3. Provide Safe and High Quality Trail Experiences: High quality trail experiences depend upon clear and adequate trail rules and an attitude of consideration and respect by all user groups for one another and for the trail. As well, trails need to be built and maintained to specifications that ensure safe use and minimal degradation by intended user groups. It is reasonable to expect that, given the present state of the rail trail, there may be limits on allowable uses, especially at wet times of the year.

4. Support Established Local Uses – Compatibility and Balance: A challenging issue in this project has been addressing the mixing of human-powered and motorized trail uses. There have been several efforts locally over the years to work out agreeable arrangements. The BC Recreation Manual, used by government ministries to plan and design trails, states that “in most cases, motorized and non-motorized use on the same trail is not recommended.” It is clear from survey results and user reports that the vast majority of activity on the rail trail is non-motorized year-round. However, there is also a history of responsible use and maintenance of the trail by some local ATV users, and, likely because of the low level of motorized use, a mostly friendly relationship exists between user groups. Wide-open motorized designation was not the preferred option of anyone consulted during development of this proposal, including local ATV users.

Trail Use Recommendations

All trail uses will be subject to trail conditions, wildlife issues, and other circumstances that may be present at any given time. Future trail use will likely also be affected by recommendations from the recreational use impact assessment to be organized by the proposed rail trail Society. Adjacent landowners will need to be assured that their interests are protected.

Regarding motorized use, one option from earlier stakeholder discussions that continues to have support and forms part of this proposal is offering local ATV users limited access to the trail. This could be done through a “Friends of the Trail” program organized by the trail Society. Memberships would be available in limited numbers to residents who are current users of the trail or who have disabled or elderly family members who could not otherwise enjoy it. This program would have restrictions (i.e. 10km/hr, certain days of the week) and be reviewed after one year. Special one-day ATV permits, for locals and others, could also be issued when wildlife and trail conditions are favourable. Current recreational snowmobile use is extremely small and will be limited to this level. The use of ‘dirt bikes’ or other motorcycles will not be permitted. **For more detail on this topic, please see the full management plan proposal document.**

In summary, in keeping with the historic and current use pattern, the entire trail will be managed for non-motorized use with limited local motorized access. From the Girl Guide Camp area to Bonanza Rd. and through Hills, and at the northernmost end of the trail, higher motorized use is expected. Each trail section also has some special considerations:

- **Rosebery to Girl Guide Camp:** This section has the softest soils and most wet areas of the entire trail and is the section most in need of drainage work. It is grown in and narrow with poor sight lines in several places. The large majority of use is non-motorized, and it connects to the non-motorized Galena Trail in Rosebery. There is potential to provide wheel-chair access to the lakeshore. Given these factors, this section will be managed for non-motorized use with very limited ATV access.
- **Girl Guide Camp to Bonanza Road:** Local access to the popular beach will be accommodated. Further assessment is required to clarify options. Toilet facilities are needed. The adjacent former Girl Guide camp property, which recently reverted to the province, will be included in the application for official trail designation.
- **Bonanza Corridor:** This section has very high values for wildlife and fisheries. Several areas have drainage issues. The seasonal presence of grizzly bears, black bears, wolves and moose are potential hazards to trail users. Cross-country ski track-setting equipment is used in the Hills area. Cross-country ski use will be accommodated subject to results from the planned recreational-use impact assessment.
- **Summit Lake:** The section along Summit Lake Marsh will be managed for wildlife, including grizzly bears, bird habitat and western toads. From the RDCK Area H/K boundary to Ruby Range Road, trail use will be managed consistent with the motorized Nakusp-Summit Lake trail, enabling motorized users from the north continued access to the McDonald Creek logging road network. Southeast of Ruby Range Road motorized use will be restricted as on the rest of the rail trail.

Operations and Funding

An annual Operations Plan and Budget will be prepared by the local Society to categorize activities into three levels. First, baseline repair and ongoing maintenance activities will be identified. Second, special projects to address major trail repairs will be separately identified. Third, required infrastructure or structural improvements (parking, shelters, kiosks, signage etc.) will be justified on a case-by-case basis, communicating and seeking public approval as and when required.

Trail remediation and improvement will be a multi-year endeavor requiring consultation with trail building experts and likely biologists, hydrologists and engineers. Archeological and infrastructure planning will be accomplished with the input of locals and stakeholders as well as First Nations. In the first year, the Society will be legally established and will raise funds and conduct assessments for biological impact, First Nations sites, trail bed and hazard conditions, as well as stakeholder consultations. Improvements will be prioritized, and a timeline developed. Initial trail improvement priorities will be to restore and preserve the trail bed.

Annual routine maintenance conducted by the Society will typically include clearing of deadfall and brush, trail and facility inspection, clearing of culverts and watercourses, repair of trail surface as required, and trail hazard identification and trail closure, as required. Additional aspects of the annual operating plan will be developed with public input as appropriate including, but not limited to: access points, signage, rest areas, sanitation facilities, demarcations and any required fencing.

Annual routine maintenance will require at least \$5000. Some of this cost can be reduced with volunteer labour. Another \$1000 will be required for insurance and administrative costs. Additional funding will be required for assessments, major trail work, and infrastructure projects. Funding will be sought from the Columbia Basin Trust, the Province, the RDCK, and other agencies and organizations, as well as by fundraising events, donations etc.

Ongoing Risk Management

User safety and responsible use are of primary importance. While trail users will be responsible for their own safety, preventive measures will be taken by the Society to minimize risk and to inform and educate trail users. When the conditions of the trail present a hazard, signage will be erected warning users of the type of danger and expected date of remediation. Given the drainage issues in some sections of the trail, portions of the trail may be closed for extended periods for remediation. Seasonal closures will also be necessary to ensure the safety of users and protection of wildlife habitats. Examples of actions to ensure appropriate usage and safety include:

- Grizzly bear seasonal warning signage will be erected and closures invoked as needed.
- Trail information regarding trail etiquette, governing regulations and emergency contact will be provided in brochures, signs and trailhead kiosks.
- Users will be informed that dogs are to be kept under control at all times.
- Users will be informed of privately held adjacent lands and that trespassing could be subject to legal action.
- All road crossings will be clearly marked.
- Camping will not be permitted on or along the trail.
- Hunting or discharge of any firearm along the trail will be strictly prohibited.
- Invasive species awareness and educational information will be provided.

The Province of BC will provide adequate property and liability insurance for the trail. The Society will carry Directors' liability insurance. The Society will attempt to minimize user and adjacent landowner conflicts by involving affected stakeholders in the development and management of the trail. The Society will attempt to resolve any issues through dialogue and corrective action. Civil or criminal matters will be directed to the appropriate authorities for resolution.

Management Plan Approval Process and Next Steps

Local residents must support this management plan proposal as a condition of its moving forward. A household poll of residents in RDCK Area H north will be used to gauge this support. This poll will be distributed as an insert to the Valley Voice newspaper. Poll responses will be anonymous and controlled through a numbering system, with results tabulated by an independent consultant.

*Questions? See the full proposal document, FAQs on the website, or email:
roseberysummitrailtrail@gmail.com*

The Rosebery-Summit Lake Rail Trail is a jewel waiting to be polished.

Please participate in the public poll. Enjoy your trail!