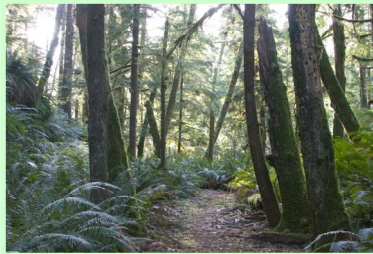


Alberni Valley Trails Planning Study

Friends of the Log Train Trail
Society

December 2006



Alberni Valley Trails Planning Study

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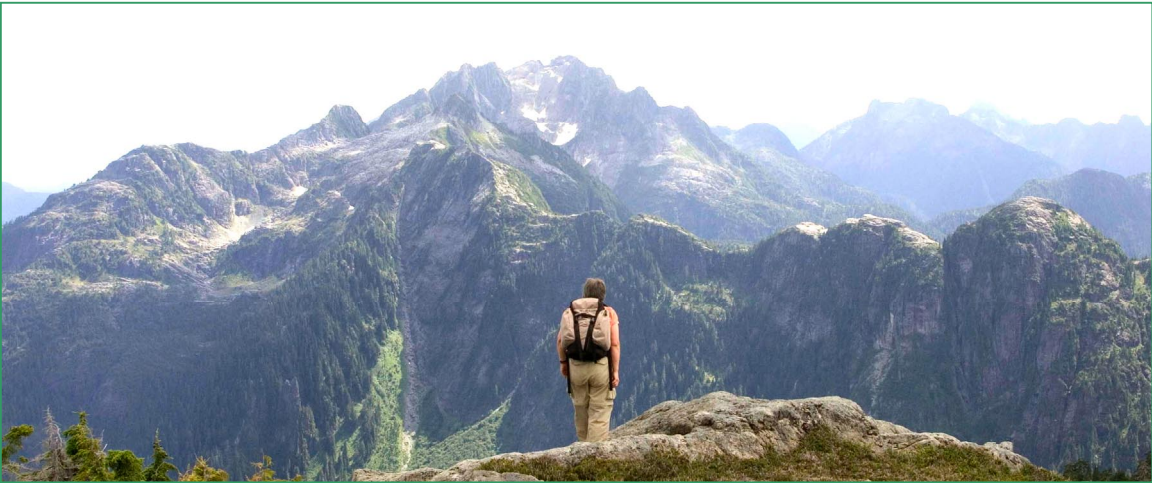
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Maps and Illustrations

- Map of Regional District of Alberni-Clayoquot and adjoining Regional Districts
- Map of Key Regional Trails, including Region to Region links



Acknowledgements

The Alberni-Clayoquot Regional District provided financial support for this study and we wish to acknowledge their support. An important part of this project was development of digital maps showing the extent of trails in the Alberni Valley. Fieldwork was undertaken by members of Alberni Valley Outdoors Club and was supported by the GIS department of the Alberni-Clayoquot Regional District.

In addition, support of Libby Avis and Rick Avis of The Friends of the Log Train Trail (FOLTT) was invaluable. Their combined background knowledge and understanding of trails in the Alberni Valley enables this study to provide detailed and concise information on the nature and extent of trail opportunities in the Alberni Valley.

The study was supported by input from the following individuals and we are grateful for their support.

- Harold Carlson: Alberni Valley Outdoor Club & FOLTT
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Project Background

The Friends of the Log Train Trail (FOLTT) is a volunteer organization based in the Alberni Valley whose primary mandate is to promote and assist in the maintenance of the Log Train Trail, which runs for 22 plus kilometers along the foot of the Beaufort Range.

There are, however, many other trails throughout the Valley, ranging from urban to alpine, many of which are little known even within the Port Alberni community. Nevertheless, to date, there has been no formal, overall planning for trail development throughout the Alberni Region. There appears to be some urgency in doing this now, before we find ourselves subject to the types of development pressure now being experienced on the east coast of Vancouver Island.



In the spring of 2005, FOLTT therefore made a proposal to the Alberni-Clayoquot Regional District to begin trail planning on a comprehensive basis in the Alberni Valley. This was approved by the Regional Board, who provided a small grant and agreed to provide mapping assistance.

Throughout the summer, volunteers co-coordinated by FOLTT mapped trails using GPS equipment. This inventory now captures most of the known trail resources in the Alberni Valley.

FOLTT then engaged RRL Recreation Resources Ltd., a firm specializing in outdoor recreation and resource planning, to assess the quality of these trail resources and to prepare a framework for a Regional Trail Plan.

Drawing from examples around the Province and other countries the study places the Alberni Valley trails in context and lays out the key steps required to bring the Regional Trails System into operation.

Study Objective

The Alberni Valley Trails Planning study is designed to:

- Highlight the research work done on the Alberni trails and the resources the trails link together,
- Provide an understanding of the quality of the resources involved,
- Illustrate the benefits of regional trail development,
- Outline the main steps leading to regional trail establishment in the Alberni Valley.

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Introduction

The Alberni Valley is a destination where a visitor can spend two weeks and do something different every day.

Mike Irg, Alberni-Clayoquot Regional District

Trails have an interesting history throughout the world. Some trails are centuries old and still in daily use today. The world is now connected by increasing numbers of roads, railways and highways and the original role of trails, that of a transportation route, has lessened in importance.

As the speed of daily life increases, trails provide a way to travel through our community at a pace that contributes to our health and wellness. Trails offer an alternative to travel by car. Unless we start to take the steps now, we will increasingly view our community through a vehicle window and from a roadway, rather than being able to walk or bike through our valley in a meaningful way.

While traditional resource extraction and processing industries remain the main employers, there is growing recognition of the value of diversifying our local economy, of building new industries such as tourism, and of embracing and recognizing the depth of First Nations traditional knowledge which permeates our valley.



We are increasingly aware of how our activities contribute to global warming, and all levels of government are encouraging means of reducing greenhouse gas production, including supporting alternative means of transportation, such that a well designed and maintained regional trail system can offer. Indeed, for Canadians, the environment has become a primary focus.

The health of Canadians is also a growing concern, particularly in areas of childhood obesity, and again, a well designed Regional Trails System has the potential to offer significant health benefits, through for example, trail networks that connect neighborhoods with local schools and park areas.

Within the Regional District of Alberni-Clayoquot we see sustained and increasingly large scale investments in tourism infrastructure, including trails, which attract increasing numbers of visitors from around the world. There is no question that the quality of the natural and cultural resources in our valley are of international caliber.

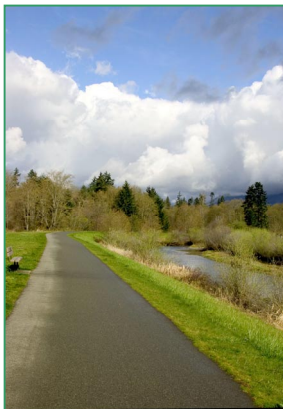
Visitors are increasingly seeking safe, peaceful locations from around the globe that offer a diversity of outdoor experiences, easily accessible from a central location. The development of a Regional Trails System can provide the framework upon which a wide range of supporting infrastructure can be developed and which can compete in the international tourism market place.

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For a Regional Trails System to succeed, the investment made by local volunteers over the last several years now needs to be taken over by local government, and provided with long-term support and direction.

North American demographics point to an aging and active population. Along with the expected boom in tourism from China, sustained growth in tourism can be predicted. The development of high quality trails throughout the Alberni Valley can benefit from this tourism boom.

The key to success lies in building a Regional Trails System of international caliber, equal to the quality and range of natural and cultural resources in the Alberni Valley. It does require more than a 'build it and they will come' approach. The system needs promotion through dedicated web pages, involvement of private landowners and businesses, and sustained consultation with the six electoral areas, which make up the Regional District of Alberni-Clayoquot.



Currently the fragmented sections of trail have a low profile in the Alberni Valley and are virtually unknown outside of the valley. This despite the quality of the trails and the areas they access. Finally it is worth highlighting again the exceptional quality of natural resources in the Alberni Valley from sea to alpine. There is a wide range of outdoor natural environments concentrated in the valley. The informal network of trails that access these remarkable places, largely known only to local enthusiasts, is extensive. With modest improvements, the fragmented trail resources can be combined to create an effective economic tool that also increases the quality life in the Alberni Valley.

The development of a Regional Trail System has the potential to open the doors to these special places, make them broadly accessible to residents of the Alberni Valley and as well, to make accessible much sought-after hiking and walking experiences that will draw visitors from around the world.

For many years, trails have been taken for granted and their value not widely recognized. Often, it is when a trail is closed that its value is appreciated. Historically, trails have not been seen as valuable tourism attractions, but now, communities such as Whistler, Rossland, Nelson, cities such as Calgary, lead the way and draw significant economic returns from trail infrastructure.

The tourism research is clear; increasing numbers of visitors look for walking and hiking opportunities when planning their travel. Communities without trail infrastructure will increasingly miss out on this important economic opportunity

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while those preparing and building trail systems will draw economic returns for long periods, while also benefiting the health and wellness of their communities.

Building the Regional Trails System

The following section outlines the main elements that will contribute to building a Regional Trail System in the Alberni Valley.

Following a 'who, when, why, what, where and how' format, this section provides information on the role of local government, the stages leading to a regional trail system, the resources involved, the location of key trail resources, and outlines the benefits a regional trails system offers to our community.

Who will look after the Regional Trails System?

Regional scale recreation infrastructure is generally not developed or maintained solely by volunteers. In the Alberni Valley, the work done by local volunteers has, through research and fieldwork and over a period of years, developed a knowledge base leading to identification of a large, regional-scale recreation/tourism opportunity.

The background information is now more quantified than it ever has been in terms of specific locations and resources associated with each trail network. Now, a Regional Government dedicated trails or trail and parks function is required to guide development and operation of a valley wide trail systems program.

When will it happen?

Time lines for building recreation and tourism infrastructure involving mixes of land tenure and a range of infrastructure are difficult to cost accurately and to assign precise time lines to. Progress can be measured in phases, and objectives or milestones can be set so as to guide development over a period of time. A possible time line scenario for the Alberni Valley Regional Trail System is outlined below:



What is a Regional Trails System?

A Regional Trail Network or System can be defined as simply as:

'A coordinated system of trails linking key areas of a community together'.

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In the Alberni Valley, in addition to connections from the city core to nearby and outlying neighborhoods, a Regional Trail System would provide connections to key features (coast – alpine areas), retrace historical and First Nations routes, and connect major trails with networks in adjoining Regional Districts, such as the RDN with an already existing Regional Trails Function.

What will it look like?

The envisioned regional trail system will have:

- Initially a part time leading to a full time regional trail coordinator position.
- Annual budget and five year development plan that identifies key capital costs in addition to maintenance and upgrades.
- Web page space on the RDAC web site with links to adjoining regional districts.
- Dedicated budget that encourages public-private partnerships.
- Published events schedules – community/public/corporate events.
- Distinctive signage system that identifies all trails that are part of the regional system.
- Trails that range in difficulty from wheel chair accessible to challenging for experienced hikers. Mountain climbing caliber routes are not envisioned as being part of the Regional Trails System.
- Trailheads of consistent appearance.
- Coordinating or steering committee with representation from the Regional District, the City of Port Alberni and community/user groups.

Why Build a Regional Trails System – The Benefits.



Individually, trails provide local benefits, allowing residents to walk their dog for example, or provide alternate routes to ride their bikes rather than taking a main road. Some of the larger trails provide regional benefits, such as the Log Train Trail, which connects several neighborhoods, and are significant enough to attract residents from other locations in the valley as well as some visitors from outside of the Valley having a specialized interest in what a trail such as the Log Train Trail offers.

Collectively however, these local and some major trails currently do not deliver anywhere close to their potential benefit to the Valley and are not structured to attract significant visitation from outside of the Valley. They are not coordinated in their placement, to enable for example travel from the core of the city to the different neighborhoods around it. Also, they have little or no formal management, so apart from some locally produced and known maps and guidebooks, the location of trails, and particularly trailheads in the Valley are not widely known.

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Trails in the Valley are in wide ranging condition that can and does vary – and are dependant on volunteer maintenance, which is increasingly stretched as the network expands.

With a Regional Trail System visitors will be attracted to the Alberni Valley because they will know there is an excellent system of maintained trails of varying difficulty. They will know the valley offers a diverse mix of natural settings, with supporting tours and accommodations such as B&B's. They will know there are trails that provide easy access to exceptionally high quality alpine areas, to old railway routes along the ocean, or along age-old First Nations travel and trade routes.

The Regional Trail System will attract new commercial events to the Alberni Valley, and this has potential for direct event-derived benefits, as well as raising the overall profile of the Valley and building the highly desirable repeat visitor base. By taking a valley wide view, where the extent of existing trail resources can be viewed, it is possible to see:

- Where connections can be made that provide the best benefit,
- What types of opportunities are being accessed (i.e. alpine, waterfront) and to coordinate trail access to key resources,
- Where the main opportunities lie, and where the main constraints are located.
- The order of development throughout the Valley.

This valley-wide view is perhaps the key element needed to start building the Regional Trails System and to respond to issues that typically occur, such as local concerns over new trails or trail extensions.

A Regional Trail function would:

- Justify formalized funding and management of a coordinated trail system throughout the Valley - manage trail maintenance and development.
- Coordinate the assembly of trails throughout the Valley, including between the City, the Regional District and each Electoral Area, and with the adjoining Regional Districts – building for example on existing community plan language for cooperation with the RDN and trail connectivity.
- Plan the long-term development of the trail system, coordinating trail connections with other developments ongoing in the Valley.
- Provide a central contact point providing information for residents and visitors on trails, trail events as well as coordinating input from residents and visitors as the trail system builds.
- Provide a central contact point for owners of private land, where significant trail potential is located, and as well provide them with the knowledge trail development and maintenance is of a Regional Government standard.
- Raise the profile and caliber of the trail system such that new visitors and new investment are attracted to the Valley.

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- Broaden the recreation platform throughout the Valley by providing established and maintained links to key resources along a range of settings (coastal to alpine, First Nations and Early settlement history, etc.).
- Coordinate efforts to provide alternative connections throughout the valley over a sustained period of time.
- Enable funding applications at the Provincial and Federal level when programs and initiatives come available.

In summary, coordination of trail resources in the Alberni Valley will lead to Valley wide benefits. By taking the lead, the Regional District of Alberni-Clayoquot can undertake a leadership role in resolving long standing cross-jurisdictional challenges, direct the building the trail system and marketing of the opportunities it will bring to the Valley.

Where are the Regional Trails?



At the end of this report is a map showing the location of trails throughout the four Alberni Valley Electoral Areas and the City of Port Alberni. There are approximately 140 trails that have been mapped in the valley ranging in length from approximately 1 km up to 20 or more km. The location, length and other details on a selection of key trails are described in a new trail guide currently being printed by the Port Alberni Chamber of Commerce.

The Alberni Valley trails traverse a wide range of settings, from short local walks such as the 'Cherry Creek Connector' with a mix of paths and rural roads, to the Mt. Klitsa trail with an elevation gain of 1600 meters, rewarded by alpine lakes and terrain. There is also Della Falls, the highest falls in North America, the CNPR Trail along Alberni Inlet, Stamp River trails and City of Alberni trails.

First Nations

The Hupacasath and Tseshaht First Nations in the Alberni Valley, First Nations and First Nations in adjoining communities of Nanaimo, Cowichan, Comox, Ucluelet have knowledge of land and water routes that traditionally served their culture. In some cases parts of these routes remain intact, in other cases there is little physical evidence remaining, and traditional knowledge must be relied upon to location the trail or route, and to relay its history.

Through consultation, traditional land and water routes in and connecting with the Alberni Valley may be identified and their suitability to the Regional Trail System determined.

Trails as an Economic Tool – A Look Over The Mountain

Financial benefit to the Alberni Valley derived from development of a regional trail system should be expected to be substantial. While a detailed cost benefit analysis is outside of the scope of the study, if over the next 5 years, an additional 500-1000 visitors per year come to the valley each year, spend one or more nights in local accommodation, do local shopping and local tours, then an additional \$250,000 - \$500,000 per year can be expected. New accommodation, small business and tour programs will take advantage of the increased visitation and further add to the economic benefit of a regional trail system.

Demographics support trail system building. In North America, for the next 20 years, 7,000 individuals will turn 60 every day. International tourism interest in safe, peaceful locations that offer a range of easily accessible activities is growing significantly and this is expected to be a sustained trend.

The west coast of Canada is in an ideal geographic location to receive the anticipated boom in tourism from China, where by 2020, 100 million new, middle and upper income Chinese tourists are expected to travel annually and internationally. Additionally, scales of current private investment in tourism infrastructure, as evidenced in Ucluelet for example, continue to increase, providing clear indication of business positioning to gain from the baby-boom tourism economy that is expected to have a 20-year plus sustained growth cycle.

Essential to benefiting from the North American and International demographic and economic shifts is the presence of high quality and well-designed infrastructure. The Alberni Valley Regional Trails System has the potential to be the framework on which tourism infrastructure is built.

A well-designed regional trail system equal to the high quality of the natural and cultural resources in the Alberni Valley suggests that the regional trail system should be of exceptional, international caliber. The West Coast Trail here on Vancouver Island, The Kettle Valley Railway in the BC Southern Interior or the Milford Track in New Zealand attract hikers from around the world. The Alberni Valley Trails system will be competing in an international market place, and its development should be of international caliber.

Provincially, communities such as Rosslund, Ucluelet and Whistler are known for their special trails and trail networks that cater to hikers and mountain bikers.



Eco Challenge New Zealand

STATS:

- >>Team: Seagate
- >>Distance: 370km
- >>PCs: 37
- >>Teams: 67

DISCIPLINES:

- Horseback riding/trekking
- Trekking/fixd ropes
- Rafting/trekking
- Trekking
- Trekking/mountaineering
- Mountain biking/trekking
- Trekking/rappel/fixd ropes
- Rafting/trekking portage

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Trails contribute to the diversification of the local economy. They increase the attraction of a community and lead to increased hotel nights, new Bed and Breakfasts, new events and increased stature as a tourism destination.

Regional Trail System provides a platform for a wide range of events:

- Historical – (European, First Nations)
- Eco- Challenges - Multi-Day Adventure Racing
- Nature Study, (painting, viewing)
- Health and wellness
- Birding, (study, photography)
- Mountain biking – (National Training Center, International Events)
- Conferences on health and wellness, on trails in communities, on alternatives to convention roadways.



Truckee River Park Course - Reno

The presence of a Regional Trail System leads to additional investment in other infrastructure i.e. kayak park, mountain bike parks, etc.

Key Trail Linkages

At the beginning of this report is an overview map showing the location of the Key Trail Linkages in the Alberni Valley.

REGION-TO-REGION LINKS

- **To Regional District of Nanaimo :**

Horne Lake Connector via route of historic Horne Lake Trail which connects directly into the Log Train Trail.

- **To Comox Strathcona Regional District :**

Via the Beauforts to the north end of the Log train Trail. (Route proposed for the National Hiking Trail)

- **To Cowichan Valley Regional District :**

Following the historic CNPR Trail down the Alberni Inlet, thence inland via Lake Cowichan to connect with the north end of the Galloping Goose Trail.

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PRIORITY CORRIDORS WITHIN THE REGION

- **Log Train Trail:**

Runs for 22 kilometres along the foot of the Beauforts. In addition to the connections outside the valley noted above, provides links to trails within the City and between the City and rural areas.

- **Stamp River Corridor :**

Extending for over 8 kilometres along the banks of the Stamp River, has similar potential to the Cowichan Footpath in providing access for both anglers and hikers.

- **Sproat River Corridor :**

Potential link between Sproat Lake Provincial Park, Seaton and Somass Parks and the City.

- **CNPR Alberni Inlet Trail :**

In addition to the link to Lake Cowichan outlined above, this is a major scenic low-level trail. Very few communities in the mid-island have this type of waterfront access. This trail also has the long-term potential for westwards extension to Bamfield and the north end of the West Coast Trail.



CITY TO REGION TRAIL LINKS

- **Southern section of the Log Train Trail :**

Links the City to rural trails to the north, south and east of its boundaries.

- **North end of Kitsuksis Dyke Trail :**

Provides links to rural trails in Maplehurst Park and to a potential route to the McLean Mill paralleling the railroad grade.

MAJOR CITY TRAIL ROUTES

- **Lower Rogers Creek Corridor :**

Potential for extension of existing routes from the waterfront to the Log Trail and thence up to Hole-in-the Wall and Stokes Creek trails in the rural areas.

- **Rogers Creek – Hospital Corridor :**

Potential for development of a loop trail from the Rogers Creek Nature Trail to the hospital via the C&N trails and back along the Log Train Trail. Also potential wheel chair link from the hospital into the southern portion of the Log Train Trail.

- **Dry Creek Corridor :**

Similar potential to link the waterfront at the south end of the City through to the Log Train Trail.

- **Corridor from Kitsuksis Dyke to Harbour Quay :**

Route to be determined. Possible options include paralleling the railway right-of-way, lower Dry Creek or the waterfront.

Trail Use Agreements



What is a Trail Use Agreement? For the public to develop, use and maintain trails on private land, a trail use agreement must be in place. Fortunately, there are examples of trail use agreements available from BC that are in place and which are working well. An example trail use agreement is contained in Appendix II

Benefits:

- Locally, some Alberni ecotourism businesses have indicated that opportunities are currently partially constrained by the amount of private forestland around the valley. Trail use agreements will increase access to trail resources on private land.
- Landholder has single contact point and deals corporate to government.
- The trail use agreement provides certainty for the private landowner over several issues – maintenance and liability being the key ones.
- May contribute to ESA certification for some forestland owners.
- Formalizing use and management.
- Contact with a level of government providing long-term stability.
- Means of formalizing contributions to the community.
- Coverage in terms of liability.

Why Trail Use Agreements are important:

- Enable public funds to be committed to trail improvements on private land once a trail use agreement is in place.
- Formalizing a trail location enables publication of information about the trail, its location and appropriate use.
- Effective and necessary for a community wide – regional trail system.
- Trail use agreements have potential to formalize access to significant trail opportunities around the valley, leading to new business opportunities as well as increased community wide capacity for recreation.

Alberni Valley Trail Resources Summary

There are several key points that support movement towards establishing the Regional Trails System:

- There are 140 mapped trails ranging from 1 km to over 20 km in length.
- Exceptional trail resources in terms of concentration, quality, range lengths, range of settings and range of difficulty.
- Need to secure this resource opportunity now and formalize management.
- Extensive Private land holding trail potential and requiring formalized use agreements.
- Local user groups have brought trails resources to a point where volunteer capacity is at its limit and management needs to transition to local government.
- Largely untapped economic opportunity with broad spin-off benefits.
- Strong demographic and geographic support – aging but active population seeking recreation activity combined with luxury and relaxation.
- International as well as Asia - Pacific boom in tourism creating worldwide demand for quality infrastructure, tours and programs for which the West Coast is well positioned to benefit from.
- Contributions to local quality of life as well as region wide benefits.



Appendix I – Trail Use Agreement

Sample Land Use Agreement

Background Information

Purpose	To protect landowners and establish responsibilities of trail steward while allowing public use of privately owned trails
Written for	Trails for Rossland Society, by attorney Jaak Ranniste of the Rossland Law Office 2004 Washington St., Rossland, BC V0G 1Y0; Phone: 250-362-5999
Designed for	Individual landowners (Corporate landowners use their own attorneys to write customized agreements.)
History	In use in Rossland since 1998
For more information	Contact Hanne Smith Heintz, Land Access Coordinator for the Trails for Rossland Society, Phone: 250-362-2218

Sample Agreement

Disclaimer: The following agreement is provided for information purposes only. An organization can draft its own land use agreement based on the template used by the Trails for Rossland Society; however, the Real Estate Foundation suggests that organizations obtain qualified legal advice before entering into contracts with landowners, and claims no responsibility for any difficulties arising from the use of the information provided here. Be sure to read [About the Land Use Agreement](#) document on this website.

Date:

Property owner(s), address & phone:

Dear Mr. and/or Mrs/Ms.

Re: (Legal description and civic address) (the "Lands")

The Trails for Rossland Society (the "Society") was formed in 1996 as a response to a desire by the community to develop a system of trails for use by members of the community and by visitors to the area. The Society is a non-profit organization.

In order to fulfill its mandate of developing an integrated system of trails, the Society requires the right to develop trails on private lands and, specifically, we are requesting permission to develop a trail (the "Trail") on your property, which are the Lands described above, in the location outlined on the attached map.

We ask that you agree to allow for the development, maintenance and use of the Trail on the Lands on the following terms. If you consent, we ask you to sign the copy of this letter and return it to us. This will then form the agreement (the "License") between you as the owner(s) of the lands and the Society pertaining to the use of the Trail.

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The Society's obligations:

1. The Society will pay you the sum of \$1 for entering into this License;
2. The Society will keep the Trail in a safe and clean condition;
3. The Society will improve and maintain the Trail at the Society's cost;
4. The Society will not remove any trees from the Lands without your written permission;
5. The Society will post signs at its cost for the proper and safe use of the Trail and will remove such signs upon the termination of this License;
6. The Society will not use chain saws and power equipment during periods of high fire risk;
7. The Society will obtain, pay for, and maintain in force, during the term of this agreement, a general liability insurance policy with respect to the Society's use and occupation of the Trail, and will name you as an additional insured. This insurance policy will insure against bodily injury, including death, and property damage arising out of such use and occupation of the Trail under this License;
8. The Society will indemnify and save you harmless against any and all claims (except those arising from your own fault or negligence) including all damages, liabilities, expenses and costs arising directly or indirectly from the granting of this License and the use and occupation of the Trail;
9. The Society will give you thirty (30) days written notice if the Society wishes to terminate this License early and the License will then terminate at the end of such thirty-day period. The Society may terminate this License for any reason.
10. In the event that the insurance is allowed to lapse, this License will immediately come to an end.

You agree:

11. You agree to grant to the Society the right to the use and occupation of the Trail on the Lands for hiking, horseback riding and mountain biking by the general public for a period of five years from the date of this letter;
12. You agree to allow the Society to maintain and make such improvements to the Trail as the Society considers necessary, subject to paragraphs 2 through 6 above. Such improvements and maintenance will be done at the Society's cost;
13. You agree to allow the Society to post signs on the Lands informing the public as to proper and safe use of the Trail;
14. You agree to give the Society thirty (30) days written notice if you wish to terminate this License early and the License will then terminate at the end of such thirty-day period. You may terminate this License for any reason;
15. You agree to inform the Society if you sell the Lands.

Trails for Rossland Society

_____, Director
Name:

The foregoing is hereby agreed to this ____ day of _____, 20__.

Name: [landowner]

Witness:

Name: [landowner]

Address: [of witness]

to Comox Valley

to RDN trail system

WOOLSEY RD
20km

19km

18km

17km

16km

15km

14km

13km

12km

11km

10km

9km

8km

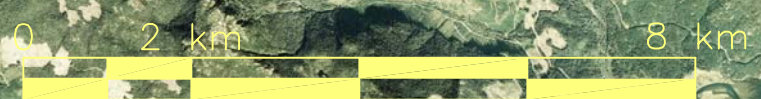
7km

ALBERN R No. 2

IR 3



Potential Trail Corridors



to Lake Cowichan