



WHISTLER

MINUTES

REGULAR MEETING OF FOREST & WILDLAND ADVISORY COMMITTEE

WEDNESDAY, January 14, 2015, STARTING AT 3:00 P.M.

In the Piccolo Room

4325 Blackcomb Way, Whistler, BC V0N 1B4

PRESENT: Meetings to Date: 1

Gordon McKeever, Chair	1
John Hammons, M-A-L	1
Rob Davis, M-A-L	1
Candace Rose-Taylor, M-A-L	1
Johnny Mikes, M-A-L	1
Bryce Leigh, AWARE	1

REGRETS:

Bob Brett, M-A-L	0
Peter Ackhurst, M-A-L	0
Ken Melamed, WORCA	0
Kurt Mueller, M-A-L	0

Recording Secretary, Heather Beresford 1

Guest: Claire Ruddy, AWARE

ADOPTION OF AGENDA

Moved by Candace Rose-Taylor
Seconded by Bryce Leigh

That the Forest & Wildland Advisory Committee adopt the Forest & Wildland Advisory Committee agenda of January 14, 2015 with the addition of:

- Wedge IPP
- Whistler Blackcomb Tenure.

CARRIED

ADOPTION OF MINUTES

Moved by John Hammons
Seconded by Candace Rose-Taylor

That the Forest & Wildland Advisory Committee adopt the Regular Forest & Wildland Advisory Committee minutes of November 12, 2014.

CARRIED

VERBAL REPORTS

3. Updates

Council:

- Councilor Anderson attending training workshop

AWARE:

- AGM held last week. Bryce Leigh elected to Board.
- Suzuki Foundation Blue Dot campaign letter submitted to Council.

WORCA:

- Determine if K. Melamed continuing as WORCA rep

RMOW:

- Wildfire Management:
 - Millar's Pond fuel thinning scheduled for 2015. RFP closes January 23.
- BC Hydro conducting line clearing throughout corridor

Cheakamus Community Forest:

- CCF Board meeting January 26
- Open house at Whistler library Feb. 5, 4:00 – 6:30 p.m.
- Carbon project – agreement with province is close.
- FWAC annual report drafted. Distribute to members for final review then submit to CCF Board for January 26 meeting.
- Discussion: Powder Mountain Snow Cat tenure expansion calls for new snowcat road from RV Park to Brew alpine with cooperation of CCF.
 - ACTION: H. Beresford to review tenure application.
- Discussion: Suggestion from FWAC that it should have input to the WB tenure renegotiation.
 - ACTION: H. Beresford to check into opportunity for FWAC to provide input.

4. Get Bear Smart Society

Presentation and discussion led by Sylvia Dolson & Dawn Johnson

Habitat enhancement and planting has been done over the years, especially on WB. GBS asking FWAC for advice on locations, approaches that may replace lost habitat, and increase the survival rate of plants planted to provide natural bear foods. Many of the plants GBS has planted die from lack of water. Goal is to keep bears feeding in wild spaces on wild foods.

Studies show that accessing non-natural foods increases reproductive capacity. In years with low berry production, human/bear conflict increases. Demographics are disturbed. When waste is managed and inaccessible to bears, conflict is reduced.

Green Acres is a successful example of an area that is naturally irrigated and provides natural bear food plants. Due to terrain, aspect and water table, it may hold water better than other locations. Consider a GIS analysis to see what other areas have similar characteristics.

Discussion re: using CCF harvested openings to plant bear food plants. Another option may be under the recently cleared BC Hydro lines. Noted that while some habitat has been lost to development, other areas have been created through logging and green space development (golf courses, etc.). Brew & Wedge areas could be planted and draw bears away from centre of human development.

GBS recommends that locations be distributed throughout valley and at different elevations to provide food at various times through summer.

5. Hiking Trails Update

ACTION: H. Beresford to connect GBS with Tom Cole, CCF.

Discussion led by John Hammons & Bryce Leigh of Hiking Trails Task Force (HTTF)

FWAC reviewed the summary sheet attached as Appendix A. Recommended that FWAC should have oversight role on Trail Planning Working Group. Generally pleased with progress.

MOTION: FWAC recommends RMOW send letter of thanks to RSTBC minister.

Move by Candace Rose-Taylor
Seconded by Bryce Leigh

HTTF identified issues with BC Parks: Singing Pass trail access, Brandywine Parking lot winter access, Black Tusk gate. Suggest RMOW engage Ministry to provide more funding to BC Parks. FWAC will develop a list of priorities at April meeting.

ACTION: HTTF representatives will revise summary sheet to clearly articulate recommended resolutions for each point, and review at April FWAC meeting.

6. Committee Administration

Chair elected for 2015: Gordon McKeever
Alternate: Rob Davis

Kurt Mueller stepping down. Date TBD.

Terms of Reference: FWAC to review length of term at future meeting.

Schedule approved with November 18 chosen as alternative to November 11.

2015 Priorities & Goals:

- Move CCF back to its original silviculture strategy with suggested improvements
- More strongly connect wildfire, Trail Planning Working Group, and CCF in cohesive planning, particularly around effects on wildlife.
- FWAC to encourage completion of a road access management plan
 - Link to CCF OGMA/EBM reserve plan
 - Identify priorities and maintenance to maintain access to trails. Include commercial recreation operators.
- More focus on wildlife and habitat

Discuss this list further at April meeting. Identify next steps.

OTHER BUSINESS

Wedge IPP

The proposed development affects Comfortably Numb and Sea to Sky Trails. S2S suggests a trail realignment to avoid IPP infrastructure. Approximately 1.25 km, approximately \$30,000. See Appendix B.

MOTION: FWAC recommends that Wedge IPP developer realign Sea to Sky trail.

Passed by Candace Rose-Taylor
Seconded by John Hammons

Future Agenda Items:

- Review 2014 harvesting summary & 2015 proposed harvesting (Feb)
- Approve final harvest plan and forward to CCF Board (March)
- Develop list of priorities for BC Parks to address (April)
- Committee administration (TOR, goals/priorities) (April)

ADJOURNMENT

Moved by Bryce Leigh
Seconded by John Hammons

That the Forest & Wildland Advisory Committee adjourn the January 14, 2015 meeting at 5:07 p.m.

CARRIED

CHAIR: Gordon McKeever

Appendix A

HIKING TRAILS BRIEF FOR THE NOVEMBER 2014 FWAC MEETING

Introduction:

In the fall of 2012, Kurt Mueller made a presentation to FWAC identifying the need for significant enhancements to the RMOW's hiking trail portfolio. Following this, FWAC requested that Kurt undertake a more detailed examination of the local hiking trail situation and prepare a report to FWAC with appropriate recommendations. Kurt was assisted in this undertaking by two other FWAC members, Bryce Leigh and John Hammons, as well as other members of the Whistler Hiking community. The result of this undertaking was a report dated January 2, 2012 that was submitted to FWAC. Subsequent to this, the report was presented to RMOW Council which resulted in the formation of the RMOW Trails Planning Working Group as well as an annual RMOW budget allocation of \$250,000 for hiking and multiuse trails. FWAC's Council Representative, Councilman Jayson Faulkner was instrumental in this accomplishment. As this November 2014 FWAC meeting agenda will include a review of the present hiking trail situation, the three original FWAC members involved in the 2012 report felt that it would be helpful to prepare this brief to highlight what they felt were the major accomplishments and remaining challenges with respect to hiking trails in the RMOW area. It should be stressed that the opinions expressed in this brief are strictly the private opinions of these three community FWAC members who have collectively been involved in the local hiking community for many years.

Accomplishments:

The three community FWAC members are very gratified with the substantial progress that has been made in improving and expanding the RMOW hiking trail portfolio since the release of the original report.

A major recommendation of the report was that the various levels of government and other players involved in hiking trails work more closely together to leverage the resources available for hiking trails. This has happened with the joint work of the RMOW, Recreation Sites and Trails B.C., Ministry of Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Operations (RSTBC) as well as the Cheakamus Community Forest (CCF) and the Alpine Club of Canada, Whistler branch (ACCW) with the resulting progress on a number of trails as noted below:

- Rainbow Lake Trail reroute and rebuild undertaken by the RMOW and RSTBC.
- New Skywalk trail system constructed by the ACCW.
- New Mount Sproatt trail under construction by the RMOW and WORCA.
- Brandywine Meadow Trail rebuild by RSTBC and road access upgrade by the CCF.
- Ancient Cedars/West Cougar Mountain road access and trails work undertaken by the CCF, RSTBC, ACCW and partial funding by the Whistler Blackcomb Foundation and support by the TAG Group.
- Ongoing Sea to Sky Trail network expansion.
- Ongoing RMOW trail maintenance in the Whistler Interpretive Forest and elsewhere.
- Garibaldi Park trails, including the Taylor Meadows area and the Wedgemount Lake area as well as planning for the proposed Flute Ridge Trail.

Remaining Challenges:

Although substantial progress has been made, a number of issues still remain to be addressed:

- **Cross-agency cooperation** -- As noted above, cross-agency cooperation has been significantly strengthened, but the three community FWAC members still have the impression that BC Parks has not joined the local dialog. Although, as mentioned above, progress has been made with the Taylor Meadows area and the Wedgemount Lake area, lack of progress with resolving the Singing Pass Trail access problem is worrisome. The lack of progress in keeping the Brandywine Falls Park parking area open in the winter is also worrisome and it is suggested that the RMOW again contact BC Parks and possibly the local MLA to stress the importance of resolving this issue.
- **Gates** -- FWAC has repeatedly requested that gates on access roads be removed. It appears that institutional inertia is contributing to this lack of action. The gate on the access road to Black Tusk microwave towers is a good example as it blocks access to the Upper Jane Lakes Trail system. It would be appropriate for FWAC to again make a resolution that action be taken to move or remove gates that are compromising trail access.
- **Rec. tenure holders** – There is a wide variation in the level of cooperation from commercial recreation tenure (CRT) holders in regards to public access on crown land. Many of the CRTs share access routes with public users. In some instances the CRTs are very cooperative and openly facilitate public access. In other instances it appears that some CRTs intentionally discourage public access. Better cooperation from these CRTs needs to be attained in order that public access to crown land is not impaired by CRTs. This is vital as many CRTs straddle access routes that historically were frequently used by the public. Maintenance of access roads needs to be shared and coordinated by CRT, the CCF, and Rec Sites and Trails to ensure that access to popular areas is available to the public. Careful attention needs to be given to proposals from the Ministry of Natural Resources (I am not sure of the correct designation of the ministry) when they plan to deactivate or change the status of roads. For example the Madely Lake road was declassified as an FSR to resolve an ongoing dispute between Callaghan Country and the Whistler Olympic Park. As a consequence the public's access rights in summer were also significantly affected. Other tenure holders need to be carefully watched as they can also affect public access. The recent blocking off access to Freeman Lake is an example of this.
- **Access road maintenance** – Without suitable family car friendly road access to hiking trail heads such as the Ancient Cedars, the full tourism value of the RMOW hiking trail portfolio will not be realized. A mechanism needs to be developed to ensure that the major trail access roads are maintained, i.e. graded on an annual bases and brushed as needed. Development of an appropriate mechanism will be a challenge as at least three players would be involved (RMOW, Ministry of Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Operations (RSTBC) and B.C. Parks), but this needs to be done. Perhaps an annual, jointly funded budget of \$20K to \$25K would be appropriate. In time, this amount would probably need to be increased.
- **Road Access to trailheads** – Access to existing trailhead such as the Lower Jane Lakes trail and new access for the Skywalk Trail and other new trails are also needed to fully realise the tourism value of the RMOW hiking trail portfolio.

The Skywalk trail would benefit from a new trailhead at the 19 mile bridge with family car friendly road access. This would also alleviate neighbourhood parking congestion at the top of the Alpine Meadows development. The geometry of the existing old road to the 19 mile bridge is probably largely adequate as is, but would require the installation of culverts, removal of roadside trees and brush and roadbed reshaping. Costs could be in the order of \$150K. Additional family car friendly road access to the North Flank trail and the Skywalk from the Ancient Cedars access road should also be considered. This would build on the extensive trail infrastructure that is already established in the Ancient Cedars area. This access would be based on existing roads that were used in the past, but are now in disrepair along with the construction of new sections of road, perhaps up to 2 km of new road that would bypass very steep existing sections. The CCF may also be able to utilize this road for future harvesting. Finally, the report recommendation that the Cheakamus Lake trailhead access be blacktopped should also be considered as this would reduce annual maintenance costs in the long run.

- **Hiking trail designations** – There is a concern that new class 4 and 5 hiking trails being currently build, cannot support bike traffic or motorized equipment traffic. Trail designations and restrictions are difficult to enforce. For example, the Flank Trail North has a wooden barrier and signage 300 m north of 19 Mile Bridge and the same again near the north end of the trailhead. This seems to work in most instances, however, some individuals claim that the RMOW has no jurisdiction on undesignated crown land and ignore the signage.

All of the Upper 19 Mile Creek trail and the Skywalk North trail are in the “19 and 21 Mile Creeks – Upper Madely Wildlands” while most of the Skywalk South trail and the Rainbow Lake/Madley Lake trails are also within the “19 and 21 Mile Creeks – Upper Madely Wildlands”. This Wildland is designated as non-motorized, so wooden barriers with signage to deny access to motorized vehicles are in order. Although not included in the Wildlands designation, restricting mountain bike access to these Trails would also be appropriate. FWAC recommends that RSTBC be asked to designate the Upper 19 Mile Creek trail, the Skywalk trails and the Rainbow Lake/Madley trails for hiking use only along with appropriate wooden barriers and signage.

Most of the Flank Trail North and about ½ of the Screaming Cat Lake Trail are not within Wildlands or RMOW boundaries, so have no restrictions on motorized use; they have also been traditionally used by mountain bikers. In as far as these are ‘legal’ trails, FWAC recommends that RSTBC be asked to designate them for non-motorized use only.

- **Singing Pass trail access** -- Due to its location, the Singing Pass Trail is one of the more important trails in the RMOW trail portfolio. In recent times, access to this important trail has slowly disintegrated. The slide on the lower trail/old access road within the Whistler Blackcomb (WB) Designated Recreation Area tenure has been compromised and the trail above this in Garibaldi Provincial Park has not been adequately maintained. Trail maintenance is especially difficult in this area due to the dynamic nature of the local geology. It is suggested that the RMOW should become more involved with this issue to motivate BC Parks and WB to solve this problem.
- **Hiking trail maintenance** – The RMOW and WORCA are doing a great job maintaining some lower valley Trails. The Whistler Blackcomb HIT group are also maintaining some trails. The Skywalk Trail system will be maintained by ACCW and the new Sproatt trails will be maintained by WORCA. As recommended in our report, we are still in favour of developing adopt –a- trail maintenance program for the trails that are not being maintained at the moment. Discussions have been held with Bob Calladine of the Rotary Club to explore the possibility of the Scouts taking on maintenance of the Shadow Lake Trail system and the possibility of Rotary clubs helping on some other trails. Perhaps the two Whistler Rotary clubs combined could adopt another trail.

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- **CCF involvement** – It is clearly in the communities' best interests that the CCF stay fully involved in the full range of ecosystem values generated by the CCDF. Specifically, the CCF should play a key role in fostering the RMOW hiking trail portfolio as they are mainly responsible for access roads which are essential for the full use of the RMOW's trail portfolio. They are also best positioned to undertake access road maintenance and development in a cost effective manner. They have also invested considerable effort in working with rec. tenure holders to integrate public recreation considerations with commercial recreation interests and this should continue.

Respectfully, Kurt Mueller, Bryce Leigh, John Hammons

Appendix B

Sea to Sky Trail Re-alignment Proposal

