

# RECREATION AND LEISURE MASTER PLAN DETAILED RECOMMENDATIONS

This is a supporting document to the Recreation and Leisure Master Plan. It contains detailed recommendations for 20 categories for each of the Resort Municipality of Whistler's parks and recreation programs and amenities.

2015

Resort Municipality of Whistler  
[whistler.ca](http://whistler.ca)



# Table of Contents

## Introduction

### The Whistler Brand

- 1 Recreation and the Whistler Brand

### Whistler Parks

- 2 Parks - General
- 3 Sport Fields
- 4 Dogs in Parks
- 5 Skateboard Parks
- 6 Tennis Courts and Facilities
- 7 Disc Golf
- 8 Commercial Services

### Whistler Trails

- 9 Valley Trails
- 10 Off-Road Recreational Trails
- 11 Winter Nordic and Snow Shoe Recreational Trails

### Whistler Lakes and Rivers

- 12 Lakes
- 13 Rivers
- 14 Fishing

### Whistler Recreation Facilities & Programs

- 15 Recreation Facilities
- 16 Recreation Programs

### Other Recreation and Leisure Considerations

- 17 Road Cycling
- 18 BMX
- 19 Rock Climbing
- 20 Arts, Culture and Heritage

*NOTE: Maps and charts that provide context and provide supporting data for the recommended strategies and priority actions are provided in the main RLMP Report. Please see the appendix of the RLMP Report document to consult the following resources:*

**SUPPORTING DATA – PAGE 35 RLMP Report**

- 6.3.1 *RMOW Neighbourhood Park Inventory*
- 6.3.2 *Municipal Recreation Facility Inventory: Comparable Communities in British Columbia*
- 6.3.3 *Yearly Park Use by Field and Sport*
- 6.3.4 *Additional Park and Recreation Facility Use Data*
- 6.3.5 *Meadow Park Sports Centre Feasibility Report*

**MAPS – Page 45 RLMP Report**

- 6.2.1 *Parks & Recreation System*
- 6.2.2 *Indoor Facilities*
- 6.2.3 *Valley Trail Network – Types*
- 6.2.4 *Valley Trail Network – Lighting*
- 6.2.5 *Valley Trail Network – Gaps*
- 6.2.6 *Off Road Recreational Trails*
- 6.2.7 *Outdoor Aquatic Recreation*
- 6.2.8 *Non-Municipal Assets*







# Introduction

This RLMP Detailed Recommendations report captures fundamentals from the first three phases of the Resort Municipality of Whistler's recreation and leisure master planning process. It outlines key elements from the research, community engagement and draft findings for the final master plan.

This Recreation and Leisure Master Plan (RLMP) Detailed Recommendations document also outlines the recommendations from the 2013 *RLMP Current Reality* summaries, the September 2013 *RLMP What we Heard* findings, and the May 2014 *RLMP Recommended Directions* which were compiled from the Phase II and Phase III of the RLMP process.

This document is a companion to the main RLMP Report as it contains each of the recommendations for all 20 areas of the RLMP conducted in Phase IV and completed in May 2015. The RLMP process involved stakeholder engagement; which produced about 90 recommendations with over 300 supporting actions in 20 categories for each of Whistler's parks and recreation programs and amenities. After analyzing these many recommendations, seven issues were identified as the foundation for the master planning process:

- Service and satisfaction levels
- Areas of dissatisfaction or user conflict
- Aging infrastructure
- Capacity and crowding
- Lakes: havens for relaxation
- The Whistler brand
- Collaboration for success

Recreation and leisure are integral components of the Whistler brand; which is the visitor experience that sets Whistler apart from other places and resorts in North America. Given that Whistler's recreation system is intertwined with the resort's brand and that the system has consistently generated high user satisfaction levels, the RLMP process determined five main focus areas for the next 10 years:

- Maintain and monitor service and satisfaction levels;
- Improve experiences;
- Plan for new opportunities in response to resort needs and economic activities;
- Support the Whistler brand; and
- Enhance administration, internal documents and processes.

## Using this Report

This Detailed Recommendations report is intended to provide background and context for the main RLMP Report. This report is organized into the 20 categories, which were considered for community and stakeholder engagement in the RLMP process. Each of the recommended actions outlined have been segmented into one of the five focus areas noted above. The main RLMP report provides more strategic context for the RLMP and outlines the recommended actions and investments, which have been prioritized for consideration in the immediate, short or longer terms.

*The RLMP Report and RLMP Detailed Recommendations* are not necessarily a commitment for future investment. The directions outlined will help inform decisions that are made by Council as part of the budget process and over the course of their ongoing deliberations. Investments will be reviewed each year through the municipality's annual budget process, where the draft budgets are vetted through a public consultation process. Only after Council adopts the budget will investments then be approved.







# THE WHISTLER BRAND





# 1 Recreation and the Whistler Brand

---

## 1.1 Current Reality

Whistler residents and visitors have the opportunity to experience a broad spectrum of recreation and leisure assets and activities in our mountain playground. Many occur on municipally managed lands or facilities, while some are owned and/or operated by others, often on land outside of municipal boundaries. As a mountain resort, each of these assets contributes to the tourism economy and the community's overall quality of life.

Regardless of who owns and operates these assets, each one creates an impression and is perceived as part of the Whistler brand. Natural spaces in particular create impressions, have unique characteristics, and offer experiences that collectively shape our sense of place. Whistler's distinctive natural setting is the foundation for many recreation and leisure experiences that residents know and love. The brand promise of the resort effectively bundles this sense of place with a variety of recreation and leisure options for residents and visitors to enjoy.

Through the RLMP engagement process, stakeholders acknowledged that several recreational assets do not deliver a consistent level of quality for the user experience. This may vary depending on the development and management of the asset and on which jurisdiction is responsible for maintaining the supporting infrastructure. To improve quality and offer more consistent experiences, stakeholders recommended encouraging partners to refresh or enhance these assets across jurisdictions through a coordinated effort.

The revival of the Ancient Cedars recreation area is an example of one such collaboration. Established in the 1990s by the Ministry of Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Operations to provide protection for and access to a rare stand of large old-growth red cedar trees, the Ancient Cedars trail was a popular and irreplaceable hiking destination. Due to lack of maintenance, the access road, trails and signs fell into disrepair. Visitation numbers dropped and this hiking area, once a key asset in the resort, was all but forgotten.

In 2012, a group of Whistler residents spearheaded a two-year collaborative project to revitalize the trail and its access. Participants included Recreation Sites & Trails BC, a number of community organizations including the Rotary Club, Whistler Chapter of the Alpine Club of Canada, Whistler Blackcomb Habitat Improvement Team, and The Adventure Group recreation tenure holder. The Cheakamus Community Forest managed this collaborative project and today, updated access to the beautiful Ancient Cedars grove has attracted residents and visitors back to the trails to experience this special hike.

Though the RLMP has a focus on municipal assets in Whistler, the plan can be a catalyst for more stakeholder dialogue. The outcome would be a higher quality and more consistent user experience across jurisdictions, and strengthened parks and recreational opportunities within the Whistler area.



## 1.2 Desired Future

The flagship recreation and leisure asset base in Whistler has increased through a collective effort by area land managers. This group's model enhances and manages recreational assets, their environment, their supporting infrastructure, the land in between, while accommodating varied jurisdictional objectives.

Similar to experiencing Canada's National Parks, area destinations have a consistent feel that connects Whistler landscapes, strengthening our sense of place. A more diverse range of convenient and consistently maintained front country<sup>1</sup> leisure and recreational opportunities exist. Improved access is ingrained with environmental protection to ensure long-term sustainability. Interspersed into this landscape is a fully functioning community forest along with other multi-jurisdictional land managers who share a common vision for Whistler's landscape. Management and development approaches across jurisdictions have become a higher priority, are consistently applied, and have a "made in Whistler" feel.

Other assets outside of Whistler boundaries, sometimes referred to as "gems", are seamlessly integrated into the Whistler brand, creating value in the resort that is greater than the sum of its individual parts. Collaborative land management agencies work together to deliver consistent, quality experiences at these gems, particularly when it comes to access, wayfinding and maintenance. Whistler actively promotes its gems, which are eagerly explored by residents and resort visitors alike. These assets include area lakes like One Duck, Loggers, Callaghan and Madeley; the Whistler and Shadow Lake Interpretative Forests; area trails at Alexander Falls, Ancient Cedars, Cal Cheak; reaches of rivers including the Cheakamus, Callaghan and Green; and conservancy areas in the Callaghan and Upper Soo.

## 1.3 Recommended Directions

*The Recommended Directions below are a result of community engagement feedback and are not a commitment to invest. These directions will help inform decisions that are made by Council as part of the defined budget process and over the course of their ongoing deliberations.*

### 1.3.1 Maintain and monitor service and satisfaction levels

#### 1.3.1.1 Direction: Ensure a balance between users' recreational needs and the natural environment.

**Rationale:** Consideration for the wellbeing of the natural environment in planning, operations, and potential improvement is necessary, as the natural environment is fundamental for recreation and the Whistler brand.

#### 1.3.1.2 Direction: Consider expanded means to communicate FireSmart practices in all areas, particularly around popular forested lakeshores.

**Rationale:** Whistler's natural forest setting is the backdrop to our recreational experiences. During periods of dry summer weather, forested areas can be at risk due to careless human actions.

### 1.3.2 Support the Whistler brand

#### 1.3.2.1 Direction: Recreation, the natural environment and the Whistler brand are given high consideration when contemplating new initiatives and managing informal recreational uses.

**Rationale:** Whistler's unique natural setting is the primary foundation for the community's recreation and leisure experience.

#### RECOMMENDED ACTIONS:

#### A. Consider the natural environment and the Whistler brand when planning new assets.

**Rationale:** Maintaining Whistler's brand promise includes consideration for recreation and the natural environment.

#### B. Consider the natural environment and the Whistler brand when evaluating new commercial recreation and leisure ventures.

**Rationale:** Nature and the Whistler brand should be prime components when considering additional commercial use of municipal assets and facilities used for recreation, leisure and sport.

<sup>1</sup> Front country is composed of outdoor areas that are easily accessible by vehicle and mostly visited by day users. Front country locations tend to be more crowded and attract a wider range of visitor than backcountry.

**C. Consider developing a means to coordinate the management of existing informal recreational uses on Crown lands in interface areas.**

**Rationale:** In select locations, Whistler residents have created informal recreational uses on Crown lands near their homes. One example is above Emerald Estates. There are concerns that these activities result in increased fire risk, garbage and bear conflicts, and negatively impact the character of the natural forest.

**1.3.3 Improve experiences**

**1.3.3.1 Direction: Encourage the delivery of an enhanced and consistent quality of recreational experience across jurisdictions.**

**Rationale:** Whistler and its surrounding areas offer a wide variety of natural assets, but the related support infrastructure delivers inconsistent levels of quality and experience. Worn and outdated infrastructure, poor accessibility, and reduced maintenance have been identified as issues. Enhancing these undervalued assets or “polishing the gems” would help improve the quality and consistency of experiences as well as expand recreational options within the area.

**RECOMMENDED ACTIONS:**

**A. Tidy up areas of high profile municipally controlled lands that appear unfinished or forgotten or otherwise provide a poor first impression to visitors.**

**Rationale:** Within municipally controlled lands there are areas that lack regular upkeep and appear unfinished and inconsistent with other assets. Examples include out-of-date and irrelevant signs, eroded and poorly defined edges in parks, and barren or eroded post-construction spaces.

**B. Establish models for collaboration with various land management agencies to explore opportunities that enhance visitor experiences within their recreational and natural assets.**

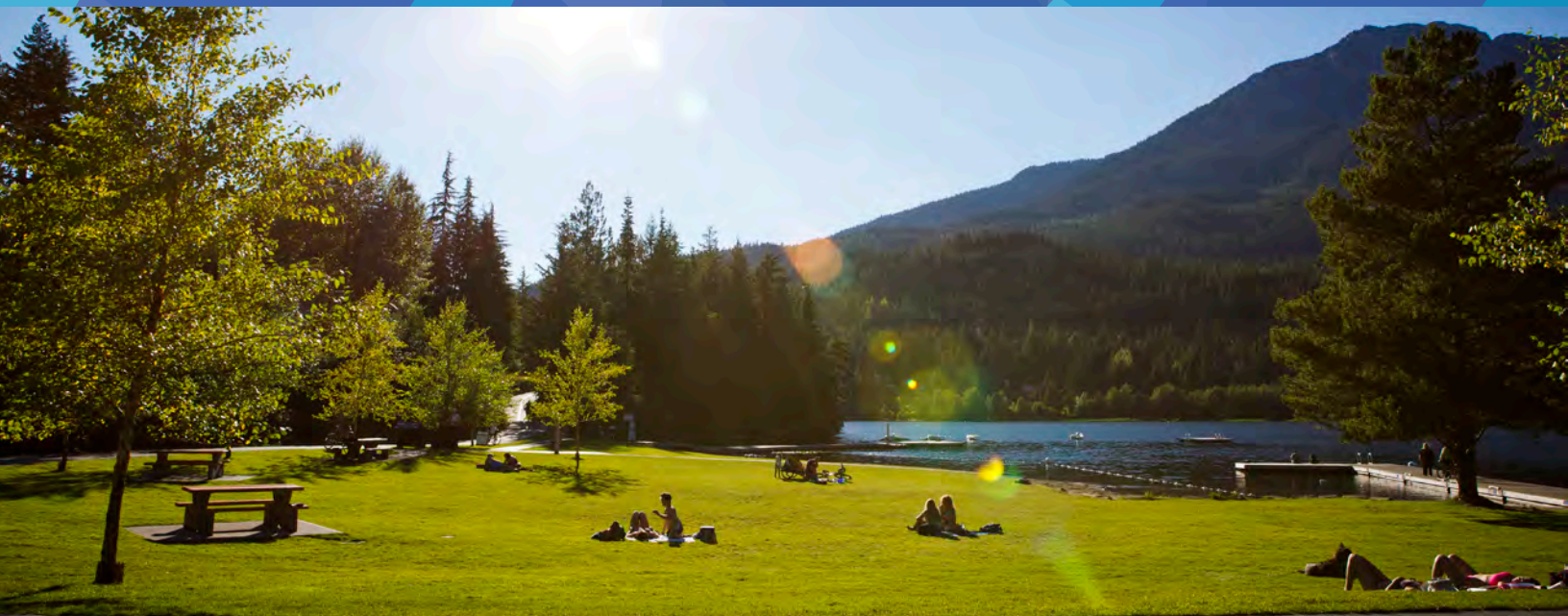
**Rationale:** There are a number of recreational and natural assets within and in close proximity to municipal boundaries that contribute to the larger Whistler brand and sense of place. Updating, restoring and enhancing these assets to provide an improved and more consistent experience would serve to both polish the gems and broaden Whistler's offerings.





# WHISTLER PARKS





## 2 Parks - General

### 2.1 Current Reality

Whistler's 31 parks are designed to be flexible assets to meet the needs of a variety of user groups while highlighting the scenic qualities that make Whistler unique. The park system in Whistler is comprised of three different types: Major Resort Parks, Neighbourhood Parks, and Natural Areas Parks.

Whistler residents and visitors are very satisfied with the resort community's park offerings. According to the 2014 Community Life Survey:

- 81 percent of permanent residents are very satisfied with access to parks such as Rainbow, Lakeside, and Alpha Lake
- Similarly, 80 percent of second homeowners are very satisfied

Additional data on parks usage:

- Tourism Whistler surveys in 2014 indicate that 27 percent of summer visitors visited a municipal park, the majority of which are located on our lakes
- 93 percent of both residents and visitors rated their satisfaction levels as 8 out of a possible 10 or higher in a 2014 Park Intercept Survey.

Whistler residents expressed high satisfaction levels in the municipality's 2011 Parks and Trails User Satisfaction survey. Park elements that received the highest scores include: park cleanliness and maintenance (92 percent), ease of access (86 percent), sandy beaches and swim docks (81 percent), close to home (86 percent), and open lawns (79 percent).

While park satisfaction levels are very high, community engagement and surveys through the RLMP process have identified a number of areas where improvements are desired. These include: dog issues such as off leash areas, enforcement and feces; park crowding, congestion, impacts to adjacent neighbourhoods and inappropriate public behavior; bylaw enforcement; wayfinding; and concerns on pricing and hours of concessions for food, beverage and watercraft rental.

Further, visitation at parks in the summer season has grown significantly over the last number of years, particularly at waterfront parks. This places pressure on park infrastructure and maintenance, as well as potential capacity issues.



## 2.2 Desired Future

*The comments below represent feedback from the community and are included for relevancy and transparency; they do not necessarily represent a municipal, partner or stakeholder commitment or intent.*

Each of Whistler's outdoor parks takes advantage of the surrounding mountain landscape and natural beauty. The community's parks inventory offer great outdoor experiences, any day of the year. Satisfaction levels in Whistler's parks remain high and particular attention has been paid to ensuring amenities are family friendly. Parks infrastructure and maintenance practices are provided efficiently, while minimizing impacts on the natural environment or neighbourhoods.

Whistler's parks have been maintained and designed to accommodate an increase in users of all ages and ability levels. Parks are accessible and inclusive for all community members, and users respect local bylaws in place to control dogs, alcohol consumption and inappropriate behavior.

The park system in Whistler balances requests for organized activities with simple, unstructured enjoyment of the natural environment. Commercial and event use is balanced with environmental needs as well as other public uses of the local parks. During peak times, park users have a variety of food and beverage options as well as waterfront activities to choose from, all of which enhance the Whistler brand.

## 2.3 Recommended Directions

*The Recommended Directions below are a result of community engagement feedback and are not a commitment to invest. These directions will help inform decisions that are made by Council as part of the defined budget process and over the course of their ongoing deliberations.*

2.3.1 Maintain and monitor service and satisfaction levels

2.3.1.1 **Direction:** Continue to provide efficient delivery of municipal services to maintain high user satisfaction levels.

**Rationale:** Park satisfaction levels are high, and maintaining these levels is important to the overall resort experience.

### RECOMMENDED ACTIONS:

A. **While exploring ways to reduce costs, continue to provide a high level of park infrastructure, horticulture, and sanitation maintenance.**

**Rationale:** Adequately maintaining our parks is critical to high user satisfaction levels and protection of the long-term capital investment.

2.3.2 Improve experiences

2.3.2.1 **Direction:** Improve reported areas of lower levels of satisfaction within the park system.

**Rationale:** While satisfaction levels are generally high in our parks, there are areas of lower satisfaction that could be addressed to improve the park experience.

### RECOMMENDED ACTIONS:

A. **Develop strategies to address inappropriate and unlawful behavior in parks, as well as park impacts to neighbourhoods.**

**Rationale:** The community has identified problem actions and consequences of certain dog behaviour; and inappropriate user behaviour (including alcohol and drug use), and impacts to neighbourhoods. A combination of proactive education and coordinated enforcement are required to address these issues.

The issues related to dogs align with opportunities identified by the Dogs Focus Group convened for the RLMP process. Refer to section 4 "Dogs in Parks" for more information.

B. **Continue to investigate a variety of approaches to deal with goose related issues at parks.**

**Rationale:** Geese in parks can lead to problems with feces and aggression. Canada Geese are a federally regulated species and the RMOW follows Environment Canada's handbook on management techniques to avoid conflicts and help control goose populations. The RMOW follows a multifaceted approach to address the issue and based upon a Whistler specific Geese Management Strategy.

- C. Continue to permit limited commercial use within select major resort parks to enhance visitor experiences and as a means of offsetting maintenance costs.**

**Rationale:** The commercial use model is becoming more common as municipalities strive to find creative ways to deal with growing operational costs. However, the extent of commercial use must be balanced with other public uses, along with consideration for the environment, adjacent uses, and the overall Whistler brand. This direction aligns with opportunities identified by the Commercial Recreation Businesses Focus Group convened for the RLMP process.

- D. Consider strategies to communicate and balance both public and event use at parks.**

**Rationale:** Special events can cause vehicle parking and park capacity issues that undermine the non-event visitor experience. Many visitors are often unaware of an upcoming event or an event in progress.

- E. Explore opportunities to improve and increase food service at parks and beaches.**

**Rationale:** Community feedback has indicated a desire to improve and increase food and beverage service options at several resort parks and beaches as well as Lost Lake Park in the winter. This direction aligns with opportunities identified by the Commercial Food and Beverage Operators Focus Group convened for the RLMP process.

#### 2.3.2.2 Direction: Consider initiatives to improve and increase general park offerings to enhance the experience for all.

**Rationale:** While satisfaction levels remain high, projected increases in visitors necessitate long-term infrastructure improvements.

#### RECOMMENDED ACTIONS:

- A. On a park-by-park basis, assess overall park use levels, needs, and functionality and identify opportunities to increase park capacity and other potential improvements in consideration of impacts to adjacent neighbourhoods.**

**Rationale:** Satisfaction levels are high and based on feedback from stakeholders, maintaining and enhancing parks is key. Undertaking improvements to maximize efficiencies and functionalities of existing assets will be required to meet increasing demand and maintain high satisfaction levels.

The RLMP engagement process has identified a number of issues and site-specific opportunities that could be addressed. A park-by-park assessment would identify baseline use levels, needs, problem areas, and opportunities across the system. It would also allow potential improvements to be prioritized and included in the annual municipal budgeting process, which would be measured for success over time.

- B. Continue to evaluate and improve park accessibility, which supports the RMOW's goal to become an accessible and inclusive resort community.**

**Rationale:** The RMOW's goal is to become an accessible and inclusive resort community for all community members and visitors. To ensure Whistler reaches its goals toward accessibility and inclusiveness, updating and fulfilling the accessibility recommendations<sup>2</sup> are important steps. This also supports a desire to improve access for families with strollers.

- C. Identify and implement smaller, passive use amenities in desirable yet underutilized park and Valley Trail locations.**

**Rationale:** Small one-off pocket park amenities located near waterfronts or with commanding views have the opportunity to help alleviate capacity issues on resort waterfront parks. Recent examples include the Blueberry Park South and Alta Lake Park docks. This might include picnic tables and other basic amenities in places such as Pine Point Park and Nita Lake.

- D. Give consideration to new ideas, trends, and low impact site activities as a way of diversifying park uses.**

**Rationale:** New activities and trends and low site impact activities are one way of accommodating additional uses in our parks. Recent examples include BMX, slack lines, outdoor yoga, orienteering features and outdoor fitness equipment.

<sup>2</sup> Accessibility Audit Report (D. Calver 2007)



**E. Add a year-round washroom facility at the PassivHaus.**

**Rationale:** Provision of a larger and more easily accessible year-round washroom at the entrance to Whistler's largest park would be beneficial to all park users. The current washroom within the PassivHaus is only open during concession business hours and has extremely limited capabilities. This direction aligns with opportunities identified by the Trails Winter Focus Group convened for the RLMP process.

**2.3.2.3 Direction: Continue to restrict vehicle access to Lost Lake Park beach area during peak summer months.**

**Rationale:** The lack of convenient vehicle access to the beach area of Lost Lake Park during peak summer months helps maintain reasonable use levels. Increasing access would undermine the user experience and the relatively tranquil nature of the lake.

**2.3.2.4 Direction: Continue to offer free shuttle service to Lost Lake Park in summer months and consider expanding the service to other high demand parks in order to alleviate parking issues.**

**2.3.3 Plan for new opportunities in response to resort needs and economic activities**

**2.3.3.1 Direction: Over the medium and long term, ensure the provision of an appropriate amount of park space to meet demand and therefore maintain high visitor satisfaction levels.**

**Rationale:** Whistler's parks, and in particular the resort waterfront parks can become busy and congested during the peak summer months. Relieving issues related to overcrowding will be important in the medium to long-term as regional population and visitor numbers increase, and as average annual temperatures and drier summers occur as long term climate change models suggest.

There is some inequality in the number and quality of neighbourhood park offerings in the municipality. Also, across the municipality there is a poor distribution of off-leash areas for dogs.

**RECOMMENDED ACTIONS:**

**A. Retain existing undeveloped parkland assets to address known amenity shortfalls and provide future reserve space.**

**Rationale:** Due to Whistler's narrow valley, environmentally sensitive areas, property ownership and development footprint, there is little remaining flat land suited to develop future parks. While some potential new park uses and amenities are identified as part of this plan, suitable parkland is generally in short supply. A very long-term perspective should be taken to protect existing lands for any potential future uses and opportunities.

**B. Consider providing basic neighbourhood park amenities for underserved areas.**

**Rationale:** When compared on a neighbourhood level, some neighbourhoods in basic park amenities are deficient relative to other neighbourhoods. Examples include the Spruce Grove and Brio.

**C. Work with relevant partners to explore opportunities for additional uses at the Whistler Golf Course Driving Range.**

**Rationale:** According to stakeholder feedback, very few lands are solely dedicated to driving ranges and there could be potential for additional uses on this property.

**2.3.3.2 Direction: Consider implementation of a seasonal 'park ranger' and/or 'park host' type of program in select major resort parks.**

**Rationale:** At times, Whistler's major parks have an atmosphere that is inconsistent with a family-friendly resort. Additionally, there is considerable interpretive information that could be programmed into our parks, to further a family-friendly experience. A 'park ranger' or host could serve as official eyes on the park, create and share natural history information, and provide enhanced visitor services. This could be a multi-partner and/or volunteer opportunity.

**2.3.4 Enhance administration, internal documents and processes**

**2.3.4.1 Direction: Update and maintain municipal park development processes and standards.**

**Rationale:** While the municipality has a series of approved standard drawings, the details and specifications for parks have information gaps and outdated information. Updating these documents would establish clear expectations for third party developers and increase efficiency for all parties involved.

<sup>2</sup> RMOW Parks and Trails User Survey data 2011 <sup>3</sup> RMOW Community Life Tracking Survey 2014

**RECOMMENDED ACTIONS:**

- A.** *Update, address gaps, and maintain a complete set of park construction, standard drawings and specifications document.*  
**Rationale:** The current information is incomplete and in some cases out of date.
- B.** *Develop a set of resort and neighbourhood level park standards.*  
**Rationale:** Establishing standard levels of development for resort and neighbourhood parks would be helpful to ensure a basic level of service provision across the system, provide clarity for third party developers with new parks, manage expectations, and increase municipal efficiencies.
- C.** *Address park zoning inconsistencies.*  
**Rationale:** Whistler parks have a variety of zoning designations, not all of which are reflective of their uses. This inconsistency should be addressed.
- D.** *Develop a long-term park parkland acquisition strategy.*
- E.** *Consider establishing a Parkland Reserve Bylaw and embed recurring annual contributions in the Five-Year Financial Plan.*  
**Rationale:** Over time additional park space will be required to meet demand and maintain reasonable park user satisfaction levels. Additionally, not all neighbourhoods have a consistent quality of park amenities. Suitable land is limited and costly.



## 3 Sport Fields

### 3.1 Current Reality

Whistler's parks and sport fields attract a mixture of community groups and visitors. Sport field use generally corresponds with the seasons and to a lesser extent, the weather.

Whistler has a number of youth and adult baseball, soccer, football, and adult rugby leagues that regularly book the fields for practices, events and tournaments. Non-local sport groups also utilize the fields for baseball, soccer, ultimate Frisbee and volleyball tournaments.

Field bookings generate revenue to help offset annual park maintenance costs. Resident group rates are significantly lower than non-resident rates and local youth groups do not pay for use of the sport fields. Booking priority is given to resident groups.

The two lower sports fields at Myrtle Philip Community School are perennially in very high demand because of their quality, central location, and total playable area (two fields). Demand regularly exceeds the recommended maximum hours of use for a natural grass field, meaning that the field, as a living entity, does not have sufficient time to repair itself despite maintenance staff's extraordinary efforts.

As part of the existing Joint Use Agreement between School District #48 (SD 48) and the RMOW, municipal staff is responsible for all school field bookings and for irrigation and maintenance of the lower sport fields at the Myrtle Phillip Community School. At the Whistler Secondary Community School and Spring Creek Community School, sport field irrigation is the responsibility of SD 48 and maintenance is shared between SD 48 and the RMOW.

Municipal outdoor facility booking staff report that resident and non-resident demand for soccer fields often exceeds current capacity, and that Whistler's ball diamonds have not kept pace with technological changes in the sport, essentially making the fields too short by today's standards. Use of baseball diamonds is declining in Whistler and vehicle parking at soccer field sites can be problematic.

People do bring their dogs to use the sport fields when they are not in use by sport groups. This is a health and safety issue for sport groups due to dog feces, sticks and holes left by dog owners.

Sport Fields Focus Group (April 23, 2013):

- Whistler Youth Soccer Association
- Whistler Football Association
- Recreation and Leisure Advisory Committee (2 members)
- RMOW Parks Operations



- RMOW Field Bookings
- RMOW Parks Planning

Invited to Focus Group but unable to attend:

- Whistler Adult Co-Ed Soccer League (input gathered separately)
- Whistler Outdoor Volley Ball
- Rugby, Touch Rugby
- Sea to Sky Women's Soccer
- Baseball Leagues

## 3.2 Desired Future

*The comments below represent feedback from the community and are included for relevancy and transparency; they do not necessarily represent a municipal, partner or stakeholder commitment or intent.*

Whether it is for soccer, softball, rugby, baseball, slow pitch, football or ultimate Frisbee, Whistler's inventory of sport fields meets a variety of user needs.

The community's sport fields are available for online bookings and cancellations seven days a week. There is sufficient capacity to meet resident and non-resident demand and allow expanded programming for local clubs and team.

Whistler's inventory of sport fields is well maintained and the RMOW works with School District #48 to ensure all five grass soccer fields on school property are maintained and include appropriate support facilities. Using the fields to exercise dogs is controlled by the provision of nearby dog-specific amenities.

Whistler is a well-known hub for recreational level tournaments, creatively utilizing the resort community's existing field inventory. The repurposed Meadow Park field is a busy spot for a range of users. Sport fields are used throughout the season and during the summer months to host soccer and baseball camps for youth.

## 3.3 Recommended Directions

*The Recommended Directions below are a result of community engagement feedback and are not a commitment to invest. These directions will help inform decisions that are made by Council as part of the defined budget process and over the course of their ongoing deliberations.*

### 3.3.1 Maintain and monitor service and satisfaction levels

#### 3.3.1.1. **Direction:** Continue to provide efficient delivery of municipal services to maintain high user satisfaction levels.

**Rationale:** Keeping high levels of satisfaction with municipally built and maintained sports fields is important to both local community users and resort visitors.

#### **RECOMMENDED ACTIONS:**

#### **A. Work with user groups to identify and prioritize potential field and support facility upgrades on an annual basis.**

**Rationale:** Identifying potential upgrades to Whistler's sport fields helps increase usability and reduces long-term maintenance costs. This will involve working with the School District.

#### **B. Explore opportunities to extend sport field seasons.**

**Rationale:** Community groups cannot typically access sport fields until mid to late May due to procedures for spring grass establishment. In the fall, these groups are again restricted by daylight hours. Users requested an early season pilot program to access grass fields, along with a subsequent evaluation of the effects on the grass. Field lighting could support opportunities for shoulder season play.

- C. **Consider developing a policy to prohibit dogs on sport fields, in conjunction with offering a viable alternative for dog owners.**

**Rationale:** Sport field user groups have consistently expressed dissatisfaction and frustration with the amount of dog feces, sticks and holes on sport fields, which for safety reasons must be removed before each practice, event or game. Local sport field user groups have asked the RMOW to consider developing policy to prohibit dogs on sports fields with a goal of achieving 100 percent compliance.

Many other communities have bylaws prohibiting dogs on sport fields, in part by developing nearby dog-focused amenities and as an alternative to the sport fields. This aligns with opportunities identified by the Dog Focus Group convened for the RLMP process.

- D. **Continue to encourage third-party camps especially during off-peak times.**

**Rationale:** In the summer, local demand for fields tapers off. This is an opportunity for expanded programming.

- 3.3.2 Improve experiences

- 3.3.2.1 **Direction: Consider ways to optimize use of Whistler's existing fields.**

**Rationale:** Whistler's soccer fields operate at capacity during peak late spring and early fall periods. In the short term, lower cost opportunities should be explored and implemented to meet growing demand.

#### RECOMMENDED ACTIONS:

- A. **Support the temporary reconfiguration of the existing field inventory for youth recreational level tournaments.**

**Rationale:** Based on feedback from stakeholders, some existing fields could be temporarily reconfigured to create a greater number of smaller fields for lower level recreational and under 12 year old soccer teams. This would result in more efficient use of existing fields, allow regeneration periods for high demand fields, and allow the community to test its viability as a tournament destination.

- B. **Support the use of Spruce Grove ballfields for soccer during non-ball times.**

- C. **Consider implementing an online booking and cancellation procedure for field availability and bookings.**

**Rationale:** Feedback from community groups indicates that current booking and cancellation procedures for sport fields are cumbersome and hinder efficient use of the fields. Online booking systems used by other jurisdictions have the potential to streamline the process and improve efficiency.

- D. **Work with School District 48 to provide basic washroom services at Whistler Community Secondary School.**

**Rationale:** While washrooms exist in the school, they are some distance away (180 metres) and require the school to be open and staffed with some level of security. Provision of basic washroom service would increase the usability of this site and improve the user and spectator experience.

- E. **Explore converting Meadow Park's single purpose fields to multi-purpose fields.**

**Rationale:** Currently the Meadow Park Ball Fields are underutilized. There may be an opportunity to restructure the fields to accommodate additional sports and general park purposes. Doing so would increase use of the fields and reduce demand/create opportunities on other fields. These fields are also experiencing more frequent and significant drainage and irrigation repair issues.

- 3.3.3 Plan for new opportunities in response to resort needs and economic activities

- 3.3.3.1 **Direction: Develop a strategy to protect potential field space for the long term, determine future needs, and explore potential partnerships.**

**Rationale:** While modest improvements will optimize use, additional soccer fields will eventually be required to meet the demand. Further, adding lighting would extend use in early spring and autumn months. Given that suitable lands are not readily available, and that new facilities are expensive, collaboration with other agencies is required to protect suitable sites for future needs.

**RECOMMENDED ACTIONS:****A. *Protect suitable sites for future needs over the long term.***

**Rationale:** Future field space should be protected, as there is very limited land in the region for large footprint recreational amenities. Suitable sites within municipal boundaries and close to developed areas are generally limited to Spruce Grove Park and land adjacent to Bayly Park.

**B. *Undertake a needs assessment to inform future capital planning.***

**Rationale:** Soccer fields are at capacity at peak times and community groups are eager to expand programming. Additional soccer fields would relieve pressure.

**C. *Explore opportunities with School District #48 to significantly upgrade existing soccer fields and support facilities, particularly at high school fields.***

**Rationale:** All five existing grass soccer fields are located on School District property, yet only two (Myrtle Philip) of the five are considered high quality fields. These two are the subject of a joint use and maintenance agreement, in which the RMOW manages and maintains the fields. Improving the remaining three fields is likely the more cost effective way to increase quality.

Within its inventory, the School District has identified the larger high school field as the preferred one to upgrade. With capital funding, this field could be substantially improved with the provision of an easily accessible washroom, proper soil, irrigation and drainage. A business model and revised joint use agreement would likely be required.

The smaller lower high school field has environmental concerns that limit the extent of possible improvements.

**D. *Explore possible opportunities with relevant partners to develop an indoor multi-sport publically accessible facility.***

**Rationale:** Several user groups have identified potential synergies amongst groups and organizations to develop a type of indoor multi-sport facility in Whistler. There may be an opportunity to partner with Whistler Sport Legacies and/or other organizations to explore feasibility, capital funding as well as potential business and operating models.





## 4 Dogs in Parks

### 4.1 Current Reality

Canine companions are part of Whistler's culture and a large number of residents have dogs as pets. The community regularly hosts fundraising events in support of dogs and the animal shelter, and it is not uncommon for local residents to post a loving obituary for their pet in local newspapers.

Despite this positive association with dogs, conflict with canines was the number one topic identified in the engagement phase of the RLMP. Major issues identified in park surveys from 2011 and 2014 include: dogs off-leash in on-leash areas, dog waste not picked up, dog waste picked up but not properly disposed of, a lack of bylaw enforcement, and a lack of respect toward those who do not own dogs. This issues applies across the municipality and is not limited to parks, trails and sportfields.

All dogs residing in Whistler must possess and wear a valid dog license. License fees are collected annually and are available for sale at the municipal hall and the animal shelter, Whistler Animals Galore (WAG). A leash bylaw is in place to reduce conflicts and to help protect people, dogs, wildlife, and other pets.

Whistler's recreation system includes a several pet-friendly assets including miles of trails, parks, dedicated dog beaches, and off-leash areas including:

- Arfa Park, at the East Side of Alpha Lake Park,
- Barking Bay, at the south end of Rainbow Park,
- Canine Cove, close to the public beach at Lost Lake, and
- Canine Corral at Bayly Park in Cheakamus Crossing.

Pets are welcome at most other public places in Whistler, except in playgrounds, on non-dog public beaches, on tennis courts, and in the children's water park at Meadow Park. Dog waste bags are also provided in major parks and at trail junctions. Pet owners are required to pick up after their pet and dispose waste in a garbage can.

WAG is a non-profit registered charity that cares for and finds homes for hundreds of animals each year. The RMOW provides the maintenance and building services for the organization, and in exchange WAG houses impounded dogs and collects fees on behalf of the RMOW. While WAG does fundraise each year to fund operating costs, the RMOW also sponsors WAG operations with a fee for service fund annually, which assists with the staffing of the shelter.

As Whistler's population increases, so will the number of dogs in the community, creating the need to plan for dogs within the recreation infrastructure, thereby reducing conflicts.

Dogs Focus Group (June 13, 2013):

- Whistler Animals Galore
- Recreation and Leisure Advisory Committee (2 members)
- RMOW Bylaw Services
- RMOW Parks Operations
- RMOW Parks Planning

## 4.2 Desired Future

*The comments below represent feedback from the community and are included for relevancy and transparency; they do not necessarily represent a municipal, partner or stakeholder commitment or intent.*

Whistler offers excellent pet-friendly resources including miles of trails, dog beaches and parks, as well as pet-friendly patios and hotels. The increased network of dog off-leash parks gives dog owners a mixture of conveniently located places to recreate with their dogs.

A culture of responsible dog ownership has evolved thanks to consistent signage, more off-leash dog parks, an awareness of appropriate etiquette, and additional bylaw enforcement. Dogs are permitted in most places within Whistler with the exception of sport fields, playgrounds, tennis courts, public beaches, and in the children's water park at Meadow Park.

Whistler Animals Galore also continues to promote responsible dog ownership through programming and public information campaigns. A dog stakeholder group advances the responsible dog owner culture by providing an avenue for reviewing plans and resolving potential issues.

## 4.3 Recommended Directions

*The Recommended Directions below are a result of community engagement feedback and are not a commitment to invest. These directions will help inform decisions that are made by Council as part of the defined budget process and over the course of their ongoing deliberations.*

### 4.3.1 Improve experiences

#### 4.3.1.1. **Direction:** Assess and where appropriate, improve existing dog off-leash offerings.

**Rationale:** Consider assessing and possibly upgrading or relocating existing dog parks in the community with the goal of moderating existing human pressures evident at major resort parks.

#### **RECOMMENDED ACTIONS:**

#### **A. On a park-by-park basis, assess overall dog use levels, needs, and functionality. Identify and implement potential improvements to alleviate dog-related conflicts.**

**Rationale:** According to user groups, conflict is sometimes inadvertently built into the design of the park and dog off-leash areas. Undertaking improvements to maximize efficiencies and functionalities of existing assets will be required to meet demand and provide improved satisfaction levels.

### 4.3.2 Plan for new opportunities in response to resort needs and economic activities

#### 4.3.2.1. **Direction:** Consider developing additional 'destination' off-leash areas in key zones.

**Rationale:** While there are several dog off-leash areas, they are limited in size, scope of amenities, and are not necessarily conveniently located with respect to resident neighbourhoods. Other jurisdictions typically offer considerably larger and more conveniently located amenities. To some degree there is an expectation of the same standard in Whistler. Provision of a dog off-leash area within or close to the Village would be helpful for hotel visitors with pets. Other off-leash areas adjacent to sport fields would be beneficial.

## 4.3.2.2

**Direction:** Consider developing a policy to prohibit dogs on sport fields, in conjunction with offering a viable alternative for dog owners.

**Rationale:** Sport field user groups have consistently expressed dissatisfaction and frustration with the amount of dog feces, sticks and holes on sport fields, which for safety reasons must be removed before each practice, event or game. Local sport field user groups have asked the RMOW to consider adding a zero tolerance dog bylaw. Several other communities such as the City of Nanaimo and West Vancouver have bylaws prohibiting dogs on sport fields. This would need to be considered in conjunction with providing better enforcement along with a viable alternative for dog owners. This direction aligns with opportunities identified by the Sports Field Focus Group convened for the RLMP process.

## 4.3.3

Enhance administration, internal documents and processes

## 4.3.3.1

**Direction:** Review and consider updating municipal regulatory documents as they pertain to animal control efforts.

**Rationale:** Given the length of time since adoption of the Parks Bylaw and Animal Control Bylaw and the evolution of dog culture in Whistler, it would be appropriate to review these documents to ensure consistency, consider enforcement expectations and resource realities, and the needs of the resort community. New approaches to dog management including a 'care and control' versus a fully on-leash approach may be considered.

## 4.3.3.2

**Direction:** Improve the culture of responsible dog ownership via community engagement and a public information program.

**Rationale:** Improving the culture of responsible dog ownership was a recurring theme during the RLMP community engagement phase. Opportunities exist to support and create initiatives to educate and improve Whistler's dog experience for all user groups.

#### RECOMMENDED ACTIONS:

## A.

**Engage the community and encourage the creation of a formalized dog stakeholder group.**

**Rationale:** According to feedback, WAG is interested in creating and facilitating a formalized stakeholder group to improve the dog experience by providing a forum for dialogue and vehicle to inform future decisions.

## B.

**Ensure dog related signage and communications are consistent across the municipality.**

**Rationale:** According to feedback, online and onsite messaging regarding expectations on dog behaviour is inconsistent and ambiguous.

## C.

**Support initiatives to encourage responsible dog ownership.**

**Rationale:** According to feedback, some owners feel entitled to let their dogs run free and do not adhere to existing signage and bylaws. WAG could partner with the RMOW to promote responsible dog ownership. WAG has offered to facilitate dog training, and will consider creating a responsible dog owner group to build awareness. Local businesses also offer dog training and related services.

## D.

**Investigate the feasibility of increasing bylaw enforcement.**

**Rationale:** The number of off-leash dogs in non-designated areas is increasing along with other related dog issues. Increased bylaw enforcement would enhance adherence to bylaws. This could be accompanied by a public education campaign to raise awareness of dog bylaws and community expectations around responsible pet ownership.

## 4.3.3.3

**Direction:** Consider sponsorship opportunities to help fund, maintain, promote and manage dog-related assets.

**Rationale:** Through the asset valuation work lead by the municipality, and through benchmarking other communities, there is a potential to secure sponsorships that help fund, maintain, promote and manage dog-related assets.





## 5 Skateboard Parks

### 5.1 Current Reality

The Whistler Skate Park is a multi-sport venue for skateboarding, in-line skating, BMX, trials and Flo riding. Constructed over two phases in the 1990s, it is centrally located between the Village and Fitzsimmons Creek. Spectrum Skate Park Creations designed the park in conjunction with local skaters who have a passion for the sport and a desire to make worldwide impact with a new and unique facility.

The park contains approximately 2600 m<sup>2</sup> (28,300 ft<sup>2</sup>) of skateable concrete surface, a serpentine run into a 6.5-metre diameter bowl (the Snake Bowl), a main park containing a variety of ¼ pipes up to three metres high, a spine, volcano and central pyramid. An asphalt area with temporary wooden features is adjacent to the main park and represents an unfinished third phase. Some of the features are considered to be “old school” yet cherished – the Snake Run is a prized asset and is unique in North America. Much of the park is designed for intermediate to advanced riding. Centrally located, it is congruent with other wheeled sports.

Throughout the park, elements are demonstrating considerable wear. A significant repair project would extend the park’s lifespan and reduce annual maintenance costs. The sport has evolved considerably since it was created, and it is now missing some new and popular skate park components. Completing the third phase would truly round out the park’s offerings and represent the full evolution of the sport.

The park is open daily between dawn and dusk with lights in the bowl until 1:00 a.m. from April to November. It is a valuable community asset primarily for youth and young adults. Despite its age and shortcomings, the skate park remains heavily used.

Skateboard Focus Group 1 (March 11, 2013):

- Spectrum Skateparks Inc.
- RMOW Parks Operations
- RMOW Parks Planning

Skateboard Focus Group 2 (June 3, 2013):

- Sk8 Cave
- Seven members of the local skate community
- Recreation and Leisure Advisory Committee (2 members)
- RMOW Parks Operations
- RMOW Parks Planning

## 5.2 Desired Future

*The comments below represent feedback from the community and are included for relevancy and transparency; they do not necessarily represent a municipal, partner or stakeholder commitment or intent.*

The reinvigorated and expanded Whistler Skate Park has a strong reputation and regularly attracts skateboard enthusiasts and related event producers to Whistler. The sport of skateboarding has evolved considerably, but maintenance and enhancements at the skate park keep the facility relevant and sought after.

High profile skateboard events organized by third parties have put Whistler on the map in the skater world; increasing skate park use and awareness of the sport. Third-party skateboard training programs and lessons from commercial operators also help spread awareness of the facility and sport.

Throughout Whistler, the construction of a few small satellite skate parks provide opportunities for skill development close to residential neighbourhoods and relieve pressure on the main park in the Village. These modest one-off skateboard installations are consistent with the growing trend in other jurisdictions and allow for increased community use.

## 5.3 Recommended Directions

*The Recommended Directions below are a result of community engagement feedback and are not a commitment to invest. These directions will help inform decisions that are made by Council as part of the defined budget process and over the course of their ongoing deliberations.*

5.3.1 Maintain and monitor service and satisfaction levels

5.3.1.1 **Direction:** Continue to maintain the existing skate park.

**Rationale:** Continuing high levels of satisfaction with municipally built and maintained facilities are important to both local community users and resort visitors.

5.3.2 Plan for new opportunities in response to resort needs and economic activities

5.3.2.1 **Direction:** Consider rejuvenating and expanding the range of skate offerings in the resort community.

**Rationale:** The rejuvenation of the Whistler Skate Park would maintain its relevance, appeal to a broader skill set, and improve safety by better separation with adjacent uses. Based on feedback from stakeholders, small one-off skateboard installations throughout the community would bring smaller skate opportunities to local parks.

### RECOMMENDED ACTIONS:

**A. Engage the skate community in development of a phased Skate Park rejuvenation and expansion plan.**

**Rationale:** A skate park rejuvenation plan would integrate and repair the best of the existing facility with new skate and ancillary elements. Objectives would include providing a more diverse range of features for all abilities, better separation from the adjacent Valley Trail and distinct dirt bike parks to improve safety.

**B Explore the possibility of creating one-off skateboard installations throughout the community.**

**Rationale:** Small one-off skateboard installations are a growing trend in other jurisdictions. These would bring modest skate opportunities to local neighbourhoods, parks and skateboard transportation routes, provide the opportunity for skill development, and reduce demand on the Whistler Skate Park.

5.3.3 Support the Whistler brand

5.3.3.1 **Direction:** Recognize and foster skateboarding as a complementary foundation activity to two other related passions: snowboarding and surfing.

**Rationale:** Skateboarding is a close cousin to both snowboarding and surfing in terms of skills and culture. The skate park is an important component of the community's board sport culture, allowing users to translate skills on the snow, to the pavement and vice versa.

**RECOMMENDED ACTIONS:**

- A.** *Continue to facilitate third-party skateboard training programs and lessons provided by commercial operators in the skate park.*  
**Rationale:** Based on feedback from the skateboard community, opportunities exist for cross training with Olympic sports (e.g. snowboarding). Feedback suggests that commercial operators provide camps and lessons in the summer.
- B.** *Support opportunities for an annual high profile skateboarding event.*  
**Rationale:** Based on feedback from the skateboard community, there is potential to host large skateboard events such as Slam City Jam, building toward an event like Crankworx. These third-party skateboarding events have the potential to increase visitor traffic to the resort, use of the skate park, and sport awareness.
- 5.3.3.2 *Direction: Consider sponsorship opportunities to help fund, maintain, promote and manage skate park assets.*  
**Rationale:** Through the asset valuation work led by the municipality, and through benchmarking other communities, there is a potential to secure sponsorships that help fund, maintain, promote and manage skate park assets.
- 5.3.4 Not Pursuing
- A.** *Investigate the possible use of the area under the library for skateboarding.*  
**Rationale:** While the skateboard community suggested that the library underground parking as an ideal place to offer a weather-protected facility, the municipality does not wish to support this, as it is not compatible with other uses.





## 6 Tennis Courts and Facilities

*Please note: The status of the Whistler Racquet Club facility is a complex and high profile topic in the community. The facility is located on private land and operated by a private company.*

### 6.1 Current Reality

Tennis is a sport enjoyed in Whistler by a wide range of residents and visitors of all ages. There are 14 full sized public outdoor courts located throughout municipal parks. Six additional courts exist on private hotel properties, and the Whistler Racquet Club (WRC) offers three indoor and four outdoor courts at their privately owned and operated facility. Many users of the WRC are members of the Whistler Tennis Association.

The level of utilization of the municipal courts has not been formally documented, but is thought to be low to moderate. The quality of the municipal courts is generally satisfactory, although some are in better condition than others.

WRC is the centre of organized tennis in the community. WRC offers a variety of award-winning programs catering to a range of ages and abilities. WRC also offers tournaments, lessons, and drop-in sessions. As typical WRC users also participate in on-mountain winter sports, WRC predictably has an increase of drop-ins when ski and snowboard conditions are less favourable.

Tennis Focus Group (April 15, 2013):

- Whistler Tennis Association
- Whistler Racquet Club
- RMOW Parks Planning
- RMOW Recreation

### 6.2 Desired Future

*The comments below represent feedback from the community and are included for relevancy and transparency; they do not necessarily represent a municipal, partner or stakeholder commitment or intent.*

Tennis in Whistler remains a sport enjoyed by an array of residents and visitors. The 14 full-sized public outdoor courts throughout municipal parks are well maintained and used. The Whistler Racquet Club continues to offer indoor and outdoor courts and programs at their rejuvenated facility.

Whistler's tennis amenities have become increasingly well-known due to investment in marketing and collaboration with resort partners. Several stakeholders remain engaged over the long term to address and identify future opportunities.

## 6.3 Recommended Directions

*The Recommended Directions below are a result of community engagement feedback and are not a commitment to invest. These directions will help inform decisions that are made by Council as part of the defined budget process and over the course of their ongoing deliberations.*

6.3.1 Maintain and monitor service and satisfaction levels

6.3.1.1 **Direction:** Continue to provide efficient delivery of municipal services to maintain high user satisfaction levels.

**Rationale:** Continuing high levels of satisfaction with municipally built and maintained tennis courts are important to both local community users and resort visitors.

### RECOMMENDED ACTIONS:

A. **Monitor use levels at existing municipal facilities, and if warranted consider improvements or repurposing for multi-sport uses.**

**Rationale:** The level of utilization of the municipal courts has not been formally documented, but is thought to be low to moderate. Monitoring use levels will provide clear direction on what improvements/changes are needed.

6.3.2 Plan for new opportunities in response to resort needs and economic activities

6.3.2.1 **Direction:** Continue to consider provision of a suitable long-term community amenity provided by a third party developer.

**Rationale:** The municipality is aware of the legal and contractual obligations regarding the existing WRC facility and these will be addressed through the typical planning processes.

6.3.2.2 **Direction:** Explore, with other partners, the needs, synergies and opportunities regarding a potential indoor public multi-sport complex.

**Rationale:** The RLMP engagement process has identified several stakeholders (including Whistler Sport Legacies, Whistler Racquet Club, Whistler Youth Soccer, and Whistler Roller Derby), who have expressed interest in the potential development of an indoor multi-sport facility. Benchmark models exist in other jurisdictions.

6.3.3 Support the Whistler brand

6.3.3.1 **Direction:** Increase exposure and promotion of tennis amenities through marketing and collaboration with resort partners.

**Rationale:** Based on feedback from various stakeholder groups, tennis and associated events and tournaments are believed to be an opportunity to attract overnight visitors to the resort throughout the year. WRC's variety of skills camps could appeal to visitors. According to stakeholders, tennis players tend to be the same demographic as Whistler Blackcomb winter patrons.



## 7 Disc Golf

### 7.1 Current Reality

Living on the fringe of both Whistler Village and the sport world is the unique game of disc golf. Disc golf is a rapidly growing sport with its own governing body in British Columbia (Disc BC) overseeing dozens of courses. Advanced players may aspire to play in world championship competitions.

The Whistler Disc Golf Club (WDGC) was formed in 2008 and is a member of Disc BC. WDGC currently has a membership of about 50 to 60 and is a non-profit club, typically attracting permanent residents to its membership. WDGC also manages a website, which receives approximately 500 to 600 visits per month in summer from the Lower Mainland and USA.

WDGC works with the municipality to help maintain and operate a course that winds through the Lost Lake trails. The municipality provides some of the equipment and materials and the club provides volunteers and organizes trail maintenance events. Since portions of the course lie within BC Hydro rights of way, WDGC works with the RMOW and BC Hydro for hydro line clearing activities.

The Lost Lake course is segmented into three nine-hole sections, for a total of 27 holes. The first nine are generally considered easier, the second nine most difficult (up and down the hillside through steep rock and forests), and the third round moderately difficult. Participants can play all 27 holes (during two to four hours of play), or pick 9- or 18-hole sections for a quicker game.

The Lost Lake course attracts about 80 to 100 participants per day in the summer with these numbers increasing each year. Many users are very social and play a round in groups.

The Lost Lake course is rated by the PDGA as a “B” level course (Blues/Whites) which means that with some temporary shuffling, it can host provincial-level destination events. Provincials typically draw 100 players over a series of events lasting two to four days. Upgrading to a higher level Gold Course is not practical in Whistler, due to space requirements and restrictions from the thick forest.

At the Lost Lake Park course, the tee box and basket infrastructure is worn out and requires reinvestment. Parking and access are challenging, because the course is somewhat remote and necessitates either a long walk to the trailhead or parking a vehicle where public access is not secured.

Disc Golf Focus Group (July 9, 2013):

- Whistler Disc Golf Club
- RMOW Parks Operations
- RMOW Parks Planning



## 7.2 Desired Future

*The comments below represent feedback from the community and are included for relevancy and transparency; they do not necessarily represent a municipal, partner or stakeholder commitment or intent.*

Disc golf is on the rise with a growing following, its own governing body in British Columbia, and World Championships competitions. The Lost Lake disc golf course appeals to and draws a steady niche of users and the Whistler Disc Golf Club continues to manage and develop users of the facilities.

Awareness of the course has also increased as a result of collaboration with resort partners. The course is maintained and enhanced, and continues to be rated at a B level, with the ability to host provincial-level competitions. A second smaller course has evolved on Crown lands and is managed by WDGC. This course offers players another option and reduces wear and tear on the Lost Lake course.

## 7.3 Recommended Directions

*The Recommended Directions below are a result of community engagement feedback and are not a commitment to invest. These directions will help inform decisions that are made by Council as part of the defined budget process and over the course of their ongoing deliberations.*

- 7.3.1 Maintain and monitor service and satisfaction levels  
 7.3.1.1 **Direction:** Continue to work with the Disc Golf Club to assist with the management, operation and potential enhancement of the facility.  
**Rationale:** The existing collaborative arrangement between the RMOW and the WDGC works well in managing and operating the facility, as well as identifying problem areas.
- RECOMMENDED ACTIONS:**
- A. **Develop a means of effectively organizing users to improve course efficiency, manage deterioration, and address areas of occasional user conflict.**  
**Rationale:** Addressing everyday operational issues will help ensure course longevity and a positive user experience.
- 7.3.2 Improve experiences  
**RECOMMENDED ACTIONS:**
- A. **Improve the access and arrival experience for the disc golf course.**  
**Rationale:** Based on feedback, access to the course is problematic. Officially it requires parking at Spruce Grove and walking 15 to 20 minutes to the first tee. Unofficially, users park their vehicles on privately held lands to walk a shorter distance and start at the fourth tee.
- B. **Consider developing a rate structure for winter disc golf players to access the Lost Lake course.**  
**Rationale:** Based on feedback, a small number of disc players access the lower 18 holes in winter via the paid cross-country ski trails. Presently users are able to access the course at no charge, which is not equitable since XC skiers and snowshoers pay for access. This also presents issues around liability on the course. If a winter season user-pay system was implemented for disk golf, revenue should return for course maintenance and improvements.
- 7.3.3 Plan for new opportunities in response to resort needs and economic activities  
 7.3.3.1 **Direction:** Consider exploring options for a second course.  
**Rationale:** The existing Lost Lake course hosts a considerable number of users on a daily basis. As a result the course is showing considerable signs of wear. Alleviating demand would help reduce wear and maintain the wilderness course experience that is unique among disc golf facilities.
- 7.3.4 Support the Whistler brand  
 7.3.4.1 **Direction:** Increase exposure and promotion of disc golf through communication and engagement with resort partners.  
**Rationale:** Based on feedback from various stakeholder groups, marketing and promoting the disc golf course has the potential to attract more overnight visitors to the resort.



## 8 Commercial Services

### 8.1 Current Reality

#### 8.1.1 Commercial Recreation Businesses

There are several commercial recreation businesses operating within municipally controlled lands that offer some type of commercial service, activity camp, and adventure or equipment rental in exchange for a fee. A portion of the operator revenue returns to the municipality and operators are required to provide some level of park and washroom maintenance on a daily basis. In general, this contractual model has worked well for all parties involved.

Periodically the RMOW receives proposals from new commercial proponents or the Crown. These proposals may present direct competition to existing operators, add to current offerings, increase use levels and exacerbate existing capacity issues, and may or may not be consistent with the Whistler brand and the community's identity.

Existing commercial operators have raised concerns that the market is saturated for some services, and adding more operators may undermine the economic viability of prevailing businesses. The review and referral process for new potential commercial ventures is not as structured as it could be.

Commercial recreation businesses at Lost Lake have been discouraged in order to preserve the tranquil nature of this lake.

Commercial Operators Focus Group (May 27, 2013):

- Cross Country Connection – existing concession operator at PassiveHaus
- Whistler Backroads – existing concession operator at Lakeside Park
- Canadian Wilderness Adventures
- Recreation and Leisure Advisory Committee (2 members)
- RMOW Parks Operations
- RMOW Parks Planning

## 8.1.2

**Food and Beverage Concessions**

There is limited food and beverage service at Whistler's larger major resort parks. Small-scale concession stands operate at Rainbow Lake, Lost Lake, and Lakeside Park, offering primarily prepackaged snacks and drinks. The concession at Spruce Grove has a broader menu during events at the fields. The PassivHaus at Lost Lake Park offers a full café menu. A portion of the operator revenue returns to the municipality, and operators are required to provide some level of park and washroom maintenance daily.

Local businesses, residents, and visitors have expressed interest in enhancing food services at parks and possibly beyond. The format of the existing concession contracts, coupled with fickle summer weather, can hamper business success and visitor experiences. Large events at parks tend to help maintain business viability over the summer months. The success of mobile food vendors in other jurisdictions is often cited as a precedent worth investigating.

Food and Beverage Focus Group\* (June 27, 2013):

- Alpine Café – existing RMOW concession operator at Rainbow, Lost Lake, and Spruce Grove Parks
- Whistler Backroads – existing concession operator at Lakeside Park
- Whistler Pizza café – existing concession operator at Meadow Park Sports Centre
- Dups Burritos
- Whistler Wood Fire Pizza
- Recreation and Leisure Advisory Committee (1 member)
- RMOW Recreation
- RMOW Parks Planning

\* Call for Focus Group participants was advertised in local newspapers

## 8.2 Desired Future

*The comments below represent feedback from the community and are included for relevancy and transparency; they do not necessarily represent a municipal, partner or stakeholder commitment or intent.*

**Commercial Businesses**

Whether walking on nature trails or paddle boarding on one of its many lakes, there are plenty of activities for families in Whistler. Commercial businesses offer a variety of activities on municipal and Crown lands that represent a healthy mix for residents and visitors.

The municipality's commercial business review system is streamlined and allows the community to keep up with recreation and leisure trends. Commercial offerings are consistent with the Official Community Plan and the Whistler Recreational Experience, both of which contain a stated preference for non-motorized activities fitting of Whistler's natural mountain character. The mix and location of commercial businesses have considered the residents' and guests' use and enjoyment of public amenities, adjacent land uses and facilities, and available space and supporting infrastructure. Businesses provide a meaningful return in revenue and maintenance, operational responsibilities and community leadership.

New businesses are formally reviewed by the Recreation and Leisure Advisory Committee or Forest and Wildlands Advisory Committee. The number of businesses is self-sustaining and areas of apparent oversupply are discouraged. Commercial businesses are not permitted at Lost Lake to preserve the unique tranquil nature of the lake area.

Overall, commercial businesses are not seen to dominate a particular place or make it feel overly commercial; rather they are part of the background landscape enhancing the user experience.

**Food and Beverage Concessions**

From hot dogs to Thai noodles, food and beverage options in Whistler's major resort parks are a staple of the user experience. Vendors offer food that is healthy, interesting, convenient, culturally diverse, delicious, and affordable. Food and beverage vendors are part of the unique character of Whistler's parks, help enliven the resort, and provide a valuable service to residents and visitors alike.

The RMOW and vendors have a reliable contractual model that fosters business vitality and offers an interesting product.



## 8.3 Recommended Directions

*The Recommended Directions below are a result of community engagement feedback and are not a commitment to invest.. These directions will help inform decisions that are made by Council as part of the defined budget process and over the course of their ongoing deliberations.*

8.3.1 Maintain and monitor service and satisfaction levels

8.3.1.1 **Direction for Food:** Continue to permit limited commercial use within select major resort parks as a means of offsetting maintenance costs and enhancing the visitors' experience.

**Rationale:** The commercial use model has proven to be a viable means to balance needs, opportunities, and growing operational costs.

8.3.1.2 **Direction for Recreation:** Continue to not permit commercial watercraft rental at Lost Lake

**Rationale:** Lost Lake is a small lake offering a unique experience that would be affected by commercial watercraft rental.

8.3.2 Plan for new opportunities in response to resort needs and economic activities

### RECOMMENDED ACTIONS:

A. **Consider mobile food vendors as a potential means to provide food and beverage services in major resort parks.**

**Rationale:** According to stakeholders, having mobile food vendors at major resort parks could be an opportunity to provide a win-win situation for business owners, residents and visitors.

B. **Consider a phased expansion of food and beverage opportunities in public spaces.**

**Rationale:** According to stakeholders, increased potential scope could make food and beverage services more viable. Expansion outside of select major resort parks would need to receive full support of resort wide food and beverage stakeholders.

C. **Continue to use technology to enhance the visitor experience in the resort community.**

**Rationale:** According to feedback, part of the cachet with mobile food vendors is the somewhat unpredictability of their presence. In Whistler, mobile food and beverage vendor hours would be likely be weather dependent (i.e.: to maximize sales on sunny days). Leveraging social media or apps would be a way of letting park users know when concessions are operating at various locations.

8.3.3 Enhance administration, internal documents and processes

8.3.3.1 **Direction for Food:** Develop a food and beverage contract model that allows for exciting and financially viable opportunities that help offset park maintenance costs.

**Rationale:** Parks and trails move and distribute visitors throughout the valley. Providing quality food could enrich the resort experience and beverage options along the way.

**Rationale:** The existing contract model offers limited products and a marginal chance of business viability. With the rise in popularity of street food and mobile vendors in other jurisdictions, there is an opportunity to explore other options that benefit all stakeholders. This may involve streamlining the application process as well as revisiting contract parameters.

### RECOMMENDED ACTIONS:

A. **Consider convening a food and beverage service focus group.**

**Rationale:** There is an opportunity to work with third-party operators to develop a model to increase the level and quality of concessions at various parks and beaches during the summer months.

**B. *Develop a contractual model that improves the visitor experience and business viability, while maintaining park maintenance obligations.***

**Rationale:** According to stakeholders the existing contract model, matched with variable summer weather, make it challenging for food and beverage operators to remain viable and offer an interesting product. Often, park special events and stretches of good weather generate revenues, which then carry businesses through the remainder of the required summer contract period. This is an opportunity to develop, or at least pilot a different model, which improves the visitor experience and business viability, while maintaining park maintenance obligations.

**8.3.3.2 *Direction for Recreation: Establish evaluation criteria and a more formalized review process when considering new commercial recreation business proposals.***

**Rationale:** A consistent means to evaluate proposals for fit with the Whistler brand and resort community values would be helpful for potential proponents as well as decision makers. Proposals would also need to be respectful of potential impacts to residents, guests, adjacent lands and facilities, while considering public safety, asset capacity and the natural environment.

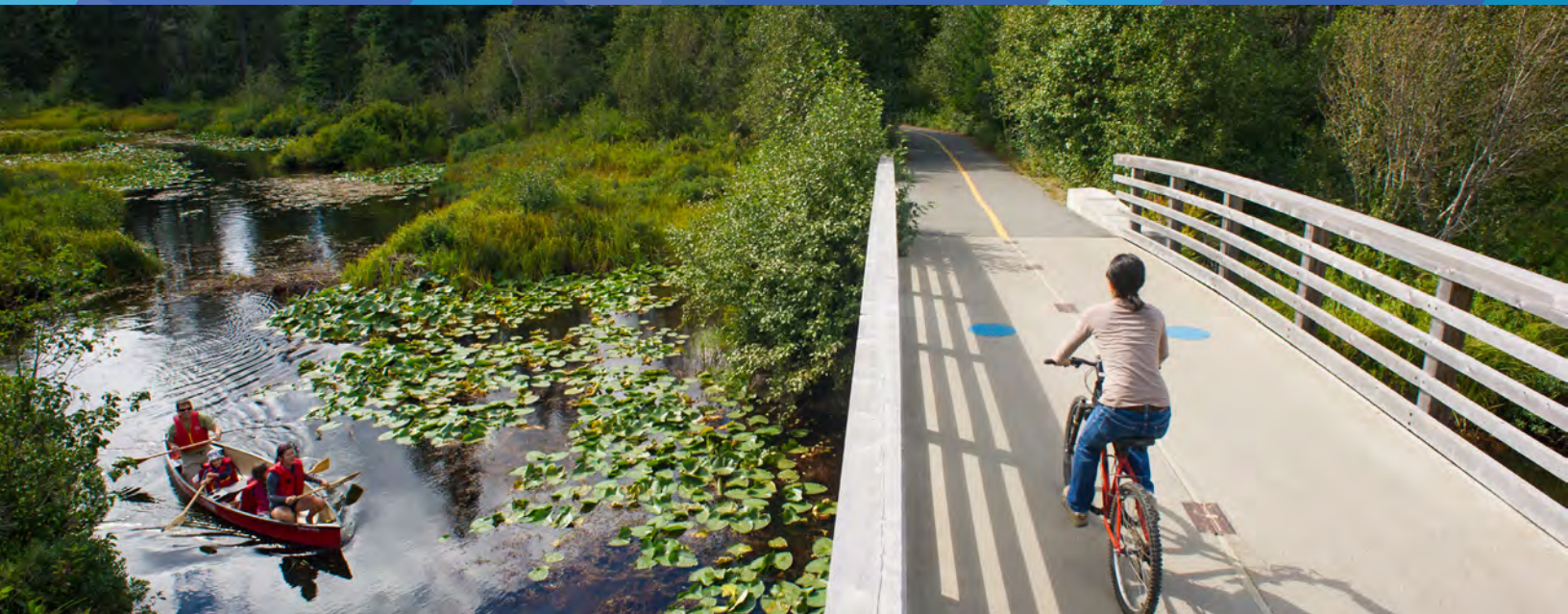
An internal referral system could be created, using the Recreation and Leisure Advisory Committee, the Forest and Wildland Advisory Committee and the Crown where appropriate.





# WHISTLER TRAILS





## 9 Valley Trails

### 9.1 Current Reality

Whistler's 40 kilometre Valley Trail network is one of the resort community's signature assets. Located entirely within municipal boundaries and managed by the RMOW, this wide asphalt paved network links key destinations of the Village and Upper Village, Creekside, other commercial centers, major parks, schools and neighbourhoods.

The majority of the network is located in a natural forest setting, which enhances the user experience for both residents and visitors. A portion of the network is located immediately within or adjacent to relatively quiet roadways and some key sections of the trail are illuminated at night.

The network's valley-bottom location and generally gentle grades are suitable for all users. Although user numbers vary with location, sections of the Valley Trail close to the Village regularly see over 300,000 users per year. These are primarily non-commercial, self-guided walking, hiking, running, and biking users. The grades, asphalt surface and trail connectivity also encourage commuting, in-line skating and occasionally hand-biking. Several times a year, portions of the trail are used for special events. In certain locations at peak times, the trail gets so busy that it could detract from user experience.

While motorized uses are prohibited, periodically the RMOW receives proposals to consider commercial motorized use of portions of the network. Proposals have included Segways, self-powered pedicabs, electric golf carts, quadracycles and electric bikes. Proposals have been turned down for safety reasons or because they were not a good fit for the existing use of the trail system. Electric bikes are becoming more popular.

In winter the majority of the network is snow cleared. Exceptions are the 3.8 kilometre portion that is groomed to enable free of charge cross-country skiing between Meadow Park and Rainbow Park, and the 2.8 kilometre portion located within the Highway 99 right of way between Whistler Secondary School and Emerald Estates neighbourhood. The latter is closed in the winter to permit safe snow clearing of Highway 99.

Residents and visitors are very satisfied with the resort community's variety of and access to trails of all levels. According to the 2014 RMOW Community Life Survey, 98 percent of all permanent residents are satisfied with walking and biking routes. In the 2011 Parks and Trails User Satisfaction Survey, 93 percent of residents surveyed were satisfied with their Valley Trail experience. Trail elements that received the highest scores include ease of access (91 percent) and trail maintenance (84 percent).

While general satisfaction levels remain very high, residents also requested improvements: 24 percent suggested connecting existing gaps, 13 percent sought more snow clearing, and 10 percent sought more general maintenance (sweeping, garbage cans, repaving rough segments etc.). Note: The 2011 Parks and Trails User Satisfaction survey occurred following a reduction in the snow clearing budget; service levels have since been restored.

## 9.2 Desired Future

*The comments below represent feedback from the community and are included for relevancy and transparency; they do not necessarily represent a municipal, partner or stakeholder commitment or intent.*

The Valley Trail network continues to be one of Whistler's most popular assets. Residents and visitors continue to be very satisfied with the Valley Trail's maintenance, signage, wayfinding and accessibility.

The Valley Trail network boasts a high degree of connectivity, allowing users to follow the route throughout municipal boundaries. The Valley Trail is maintained to a high standard including frequent sweeping and annual clearing of encroaching vegetation to preserve key views along the trail. Valley Trail signage is consistent and maps are up to date, creating a seamless experience for the users of all ages and abilities.

## 9.3 Recommended Directions

*The Recommended Directions below are a result of community engagement feedback and are not a commitment to invest. These directions will help inform decisions that are made by Council as part of the defined budget process and over the course of their ongoing deliberations.*

### 9.3.1 Maintain and monitor service and satisfaction levels

**9.3.1.1** *Direction:* Continue to provide efficient Valley Trail operations maintaining high user satisfaction levels.

**Rationale:** Valley Trail network satisfaction levels are high and maintaining these levels is important to the overall resort experience.

#### RECOMMENDED ACTIONS:

#### A. *While exploring ways to reduce costs, continue to provide a high level of Valley Trail maintenance.*

**Rationale:** Adequately maintaining the Valley Trail is critical to high user satisfaction levels and protection of the long-term capital investment. This includes managing vegetation, garbage, asphalt surface, lighting, signage and snow clearing.

#### B. *On a priority basis continue to clear snow from most sections of the Valley Trail network.*

**Rationale:** In winter the majority of the network is snow cleared. Exceptions are the 3.8 km portion that is groomed to enable no cost off-leash dog friendly cross country skiing, and the 2.8 km portion located within the Highway 99 right of way between Whistler Community Secondary School and Emerald Estates neighbourhood. This is closed in the winter to permit safe snow clearing of the Highway.

Snow clearing is prioritized: it starts in the Village and works outwards as dictated by time, resources, and snowfall. In the winter of 2011/12 the municipality reduced snow clearing on outlying and less utilized Valley Trails for cost saving reasons. Since this was not well received by the community, snow clearing has been restored to previous levels.

### 9.3.2 Improve experiences

**9.3.2.1** *Direction:* Increase satisfaction levels where needed.

**Rationale:** While satisfaction levels are generally high, there are areas of lower satisfaction that could be addressed to improve the Valley Trail experience.

#### RECOMMENDED ACTIONS:

#### A. *Improve signage and wayfinding along the Valley Trail for the benefit of residents and visitors.*

**Rationale:** According to stakeholder feedback, the current signage is inconsistent and the maps are out of date.

#### B. *Explore opportunities to improve specific aspects of Valley Trail maintenance.*

**Rationale:** The Valley Trail is one of Whistler's most popular assets, and feedback from stakeholders has indicated that maintenance could be improved in specific sections. This includes more frequent sweeping, adding garbage cans, re-paving rough segments and clearing encroaching vegetation that reduces sightlines.

**C. Strengthen connections to and from Whistler Village.**

**Rationale:** The Valley Trail network is a prime conduit for residents and visitors to access the Village or in reverse, the larger Whistler Valley. Currently the connectivity between the network and the Village, including the Upper Village, is weak. Improving this connectivity would serve to provide clarity in wayfinding.

**D. Enhance viewscales and scenic corridors along the Valley Trail.**

**Rationale:** Whistler's natural beauty and environment is an important foundation of its recreation system. Achieving a balance between user needs and the natural environment includes maintaining key viewscales along the trail, while being sensitive to riparian vegetation.

**E. Where appropriate seek opportunities to reduce grades.**

**Rationale:** Where trail count numbers, terrain, environmental considerations and property ownership permit, explore ways to lessen steep hills to better accommodate persons with accessibility challenges, including wheelchair users, aging populations, families with strollers, and young children learning to ride bikes.

9.3.3 Plan for new opportunities in response to resort needs and economic activities

9.3.3.1 Create a plan to address gaps along the Valley Trail network.

**Rationale:** The RLMP engagement process has identified several gaps in the network that could be connected. These include but are not limited to:

- Cypress Place south towards the BC Transit facility on the west side of Highway 99
- Alpha Lake Park south to Alta Lake Road on the west side of Alpha Lake
- Alta Lake Road south to Function Junction east of the CN Rail tracks
- Rainbow Park south to Alta Lake Park (Old Mill Lane area)
- From the southern terminus of Lake Placid Road south to the Highway 99/Bayshores Drive traffic signal, on the west side of Highway 99
- Along a short section of Cheakamus Lake Road from the Whistler Interpretive Forest parking lot to the Highway 99 traffic signal island
- A year-round Valley Trail connection between Emerald Estates and the Rainbow subdivision
- Along Alta Lake Road between Highway 99 and the CN Railway
- Along Alpha Lake Road between Highway 99 and the Flank Trail's trail head
- In front of Meadow Parks Sports Centre, connecting the facility's front door to existing Valley Trails leading north and south
- From Highway 99 at Mons west to Myrtle Phillip Community School and Balsam Park

Each of these potential connections has its own set of challenges including, but not limited to environmental considerations, property ownership, utilities, terrain, other, or all. The municipality has no direct control over private property or highway, railway or hydro rights of way.

9.3.3.2 Direction: Plan for growth in electric assist bikes.

**Rationale:** Electric assist bikes are a growing trend in Europe and have started to appear in Whistler. Their popularity is tied to aging demographics and technological advances. In Whistler it is anticipated that these types of bikes could become popular to rent or own. Valley Trail planning and management should take these into consideration.

9.3.4 Enhance administration, internal documents and processes

**RECOMMENDED ACTIONS:**

**A. Develop a Valley Trail lighting policy.**

**B. Evaluate existing and proposed Valley Trail segments against the lighting policy.**

**Rationale:** Currently some portions of the Valley Trail are illuminated while others are not. Developing a clear policy and understanding of nighttime user numbers would improve safety and likely increase use. Lighting initiatives would need to be considered in recognition of other municipal objectives regarding illumination and protection of night skies.





## 10 Off-Road Recreational Trails

### 10.1 Current Reality

At a holistic level, Whistler's non-motorized multi-use off road recreational trails are as rich in character as they are in jurisdictional responsibilities. Recreational trails exist on a variety of lands (e.g. municipal, private, Crown, tenured or within Whistler Blackcomb's Controlled Recreation Area). The result is a patchwork of sometimes-interconnected recreational trails with differing levels of use, jurisdictional maintenance practices, and user experiences. While jurisdictional responsibility is of no real concern to resort visitors, inconsistent maintenance practices and lack of connectivity can negatively impact a precious vacation experience.

Although the scope of the RLMP is primarily the public recreational trail system within the municipal boundaries, the breadth of trail offerings extends beyond municipal boundaries and into other jurisdictions. For these reasons this Current Reality provides a high level overview on a wide variety of recreational trail issues.

#### **Recreational Trails within Municipal Boundaries – the main focus of the RLMP**

Within municipal boundaries Whistler has more than 280 kilometres of public off-road recreational trails. These are generally located between valley bottom and mid-valley elevation, and while distributed throughout the valley, the majority is located relatively close to Whistler Village. At present few formal trails lead to subalpine and or alpine environments. Collectively these recreational trails offer an outdoor experience for a wide range of interests and abilities.

#### 10.1.1 Trail Types

##### **Non-Motorized Multi-Use**

The vast majority of off-road recreational trails within municipal boundaries are classified as non-motorized multi-use recreational trails. These are the preferred trail type as they support a local preference for non-motorized activities, cater to the broadest range of user groups and abilities, are inclusive, have an efficient environmental footprint, and make best use of limited financial and construction resources. The municipality typically invests in or constructs only these types of trails.

##### **Single-Use**

Single-use recreational trails do exist in a limited manner where particular environmental or terrain considerations are important. Within the community the exclusive use on these recreational trails is generally respected.

Generally speaking exclusive or single-use trail systems are not cost-effective to construct or maintain. Parallel trails further fragment habitat.

### 10.1.2 Trail “Ownership” and Maintenance Responsibilities

#### **Municipal**

Portions of recreational trails within municipal boundaries were built and are maintained by the RMOW. These include recreational trails located on municipal lands or secured formal rights of way on private lands, or on Crown lands established the provincial Forest and Range Protection Act’s Section 57 and 56.

#### **WORCA**

The Whistler Off-Road Cycling Association (WORCA), the local mountain biking club, maintains other portions of the off-road recreational trail network. WORCA is Whistler’s largest club with over 1,800 members. It actively raises funds to help maintain recreational trails, and historically the RMOW has provided WORCA with funds for trail maintenance and programs through the annual Community Enrichment Program. WORCA and Whistler Blackcomb’s Habitat Improvement Team coordinate several volunteer maintenance dates during the summer. WORCA is in the process of legitimizing and taking maintenance responsibility for select trails within municipal boundaries. This will help ensure riding opportunities and protect Whistler’s marketable trails.

#### **Other**

Passionate people possessing a vision and strong backs, but limited resources, have built other off-road recreational trails in Whistler. Unfortunately many of these recreational trails lack formal permission for their existence and a long-term maintenance plan. Some argue that their somewhat ephemeral nature is part of the mountain bike culture.

#### **Inconsistent Experience**

As some off-road recreational trails are formally established and maintained while others are not, maintenance and recreational trail conditions can be inconsistent. This can negatively impact the user experience.

### 10.1.3 Recreational Trail Users

#### **Public**

Recreational trails are primarily used for non-commercial self-guided walking, hiking, running, and mountain biking purposes.

#### **Preferred Activities**

A 2014 Trail Intercept Survey and the 2011 Park and Trail Resident User Satisfaction Survey identified mountain biking as the predominant activity in or near valley bottom areas. This finding reflects the sport’s core recreational and economic role within the resort.

Hikers often seek to move beyond valley bottom areas, and hiking is beginning to get reestablished as a contributor to the economy. See section 10.1.1.4 below.

#### **User Numbers**

User numbers vary with recreational trail type and proximity to Village and valley bottom. Two of the most popular off-road recreational trail networks are within Lost Lake Park. The one metre wide gravel surfaced Lawrence Valleau network (i.e. Molly Hogan, Tin Pants) typically records over 30,000 users from June to September. The narrower Zappa network typical sees 20,000 users over the same four-month period.

#### **Preferred Trail Types**

The Lawrence Valleau network in Lost Lake Park has been identified as the preferred type of off-road recreational trail. This network is used by the widest cross section of user groups (walking, running, and biking); walking and running were the most frequent users. The Zappa network, also in Lost Lake Park is another popular trail type and typically sees more mountain bikers than walkers or runners.

#### **Commercial Operators and Events**

Commercial operators offer guided and self-guided tours, again predominantly for mountain biking.

Special events on the Valley Trail and off-road recreational trails collectively generate approximately \$50,000 per year in revenue for the RMOW. Additionally, other events that may not result in direct revenue to the RMOW support visitation and generate benefits for the resort economy.

**E-Bikes**

Electric powered or assisted mountain bikes are beginning to appear on recreational trails and are expected to increase over time due to technological advances, aging demographics, and terrain with many long climbs in Whistler.

**10.1.4****Hiking Trails**

Historically, hiking was the dominant summer trail activity in the Whistler area. The Squamish Forest District, BC Parks, and regional mountaineering clubs constructed trails to alpine areas. The RMOW constructed multi-use recreational trails in the valley and mid-elevation, providing a variety of experiences for local and visiting hikers and other users. Over time, however, provincial ministries have reduced their maintenance efforts, resulting in the deterioration of existing trails. Further, Forest Service Roads (FSRs) have not been maintained, which means that vehicle access to higher elevation trailheads has been lost. With the emergence of mountain biking, additional multi-use low-elevation recreational trails have been built that a variety of users enjoy. Whistler Blackcomb has built a network of lift-accessed trails on Whistler and Blackcomb mountains. However, outside of the Whistler Blackcomb Commercial Recreation Area (CRA), the available experiences in the alpine have diminished.

Recently, there has been passionate interest in re-establishing a hiking presence in Whistler. A Report on Whistler Area Hiking Trails (January 2012) was prepared by a dedicated group of Alpine Club of Canada Whistler Chapter volunteers. This comprehensive report identified challenges and gaps including limited resources for recreational trail building and maintenance, the loss of convenient hiking access from Whistler Village to the Singing Pass alpine area due to the Fitzsimmons slump, general alpine trail deterioration, and reduced access to trailheads due to gate location and reduced maintenance of FSRs. The report noted that other than areas on Mt. Sproatt, there are few true alpine hiking areas within RMOW boundaries. Most are within Garibaldi Provincial Park and the Whistler Blackcomb CRA. Hikers typically prefer to seek alpine areas rather than remain completely in the forest at or near valley bottom.

Tourism Whistler is conducting ongoing visitor studies to better understand the hiking demographic and market potential. The Alpine Club of Canada Whistler Chapter is also seeking to increase its profile and take on a more active role in the resort community.

**10.1.5****Satisfaction Levels and Feedback**

According to the 2014 RMOW Community Life Survey, 83 percent of all permanent residents are very satisfied with walking and biking routes.

Residents and visitors have also expressed high satisfaction levels in both a 2014 Trail Intercept Survey and the 2011 Resident Parks and Trails User Satisfaction Survey: of residents surveyed, 92 percent were pleased with Whistler's current off-road recreational trail experience, 89 percent were satisfied with the variety of terrain and trails, technical difficulty (85 percent) and trail maintenance and conditions (81 percent).

Among interviewees, visitors interviewed by bike shop and bike tour operators repeatedly reported having a very positive recreational trail experience. Typical bike rental customers are couples, families, or groups of unrelated travelers, who are relatively self-sufficient. Having gathered feedback from numerous riders over the years, bike shop staff had several suggestions to make the off-road recreational trail experience even better. These include ongoing maintenance of off-road recreational trails, maps, and improved way-finding signage.

**Dissatisfaction**

While general satisfaction levels remain very high, residents also raised some areas of dissatisfaction. For off-road recreational trails, 16 percent were dissatisfied with current trails signs and wayfinding, nine percent with trail maintenance, and nine percent with access to trailheads.

**Other Feedback**

More recently congestion on the Lost Lake systems is now being reported by public and commercial users, and the municipality has been encouraged to develop similar trails in other areas of the valley.

In addition conflict between mountain bikes and hikers has been recently reported in the Whistler Interpretative Forest.



**10.1.6 Managing Conflict**

On non-motorized multi-use recreational trails, potential conflict between user groups is managed through education, upfront knowledge that different user groups may be using the trail, and trail alignment design permitting clear sight lines and speed control techniques. All users are expected to respect other users and share the trails in a friendly and cooperative manner.

Reports of conflict were not heard during the RLMP engagement process which included online and intercept surveys, a focus group, and a public open house over a two-year period.

**10.1.7 Recreational Trail Standards**

The RMOW developed a technical mountain bike focused Whistler Trails Standards booklet (WTS, 2003) that identifies a range of recreational trail types and typical construction techniques for Valley Trails to advanced off-road single-track trails. The intent of this document is to help guide local recreational trail development in building well-aligned and constructed trails. Since 2003 trail construction techniques have evolved and this document should be updated.

**10.1.8 Trails on Crown Lands**

Crown lands are controlled by the Province and are located within and adjacent to municipal boundaries. Many trails traverse these lands and contribute to the larger Whistler trail experience. Some lead to alpine areas.

Historically, many of these trails were constructed via Vancouver-based volunteer efforts or one-time seed funding, but with no annual maintenance budget. Some are formally established and maintained, others are not.

Access to trails on Crown lands is often via the logging industry's Forest Service Roads (FSRs). Generally speaking these FSRs have been deactivated or are only marginally maintained given the lower harvest rates over the last decades. The result is that FSR quality has deteriorated making it challenging or impossible to drive to trailheads. In some cases access control gates have been installed near the valley bottom. Many alpine trails are now out of reach for the average day-oriented hikers. With reduced use, many trails have fallen into disrepair.

The Province is contemplating changes to the management responsibility of the FSRs with the introduction of the Natural Resource Road Act, which is currently under review.

The Cheakamus Community Forest<sup>3</sup>, located on 30,000 hectares surrounding Whistler, provides a potential opportunity to reinvigorate recreational trails on Crown lands and improve select FSRs.

**10.1.9 Trails within the Controlled Recreation Area (Whistler Blackcomb)**

Adjacent to the municipality, Whistler Blackcomb provides paid gondola access to the sub-alpine permitting easy access to alpine hiking environments within their Controlled Recreation Area (CRA) and through to the adjacent Garibaldi Provincial Park. The Whistler Mountain Bike Park is a significant contributor to the local mountain bike offerings and attracts a large number of summer resort visitors.

Trails within the CRA have been built by and are maintained by Whistler Blackcomb. The exception is trails leading to Garibaldi Provincial Park, which pre-date the CRA's existence.

**10.1.10 Sea to Sky Initiatives****10.1.10.1 Sea to Sky Recreational Trail**

Further development of regional recreational trails such as the multi-use Sea to Sky Recreational Trail (S2S) has increased opportunities for Whistler residents and visitors. The S2S is a vision for a self-propelled multi-use recreational trail between Squamish and D'Arcy. As the trail is extended north and south of Whistler, there is potential for creating connections or loops with other recreational trails, resulting in a variety of options. The Sea to Sky Recreational Trail is generally complete between the northern and southern RMOW boundaries, although some interim conditions exist such as the 2.7 km section between the Cal Cheak campground and the Whistler Bungee bridge.

**10.1.10.2 Garibaldi Provincial Park Management Plan Amendment**

In 2014 BC Parks completed an amendment to its Garibaldi Park Management Plan for the Spearhead Area. The purpose of this project was to update the 1990 Garibaldi Park Master Plan, confirm the existing plan's direction, and provide supplemental direction regarding public access in the Spearhead area of the Park.

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.cheakamuscommunityforest.com>

### 10.1.10.3 Recreation Sites and Trails BC

The Provincial Ministry of Forest, Lands and Natural Resource Operations is responsible for managing provincial recreation sites and trails upon Crown lands via their Recreation Sites and Trails BC program (RSTBC). This program is actively partnering with the RMOW and local trails groups to help physically improve existing recreational trails and advise on planning new trails within its jurisdiction. RSTBC is the formal referral agency and trail approving authority on Crown lands. RSTBC recently invested capital into upgrading select Whistler recreational trails and has stated that it will continue to do so for the near term.

### 10.1.11 Integrated Trail Planning – the Trails Planning Working Group

The 2012 Report on Whistler Area Hiking Trails brought the community's attention to the deteriorated state of recreational hiking trails in the Whistler area, as well as the opportunities available to the resort community.

The Trails Planning Working Group (TPWG) was convened by municipal Council to provide a forum to coordinate and prioritize recreational trail maintenance and development issues among stakeholders and land managers including the RMOW, Cheakamus Community Forest, Alpine Club of Canada Whistler Chapter, Whistler Off Road Cycling Association, Recreation Sites and Trails BC. Other stakeholders are invited to the working group, as needed. These include but are not limited to BC Parks, Whistler Blackcomb, Whistler Sport Legacies, commercial recreation or other tenure holders where appropriate, and Tourism Whistler. The TPWG's geographic scope ranges from Culliton Creek south of Whistler to Nairn Falls north of Whistler. This is larger than the Cheakamus Community Forest boundary.

The TPWG has been tasked to prepare a Recreational Trail Plan for inclusion in an Official Community Plan update. A sub area plan for the Mt. Sproatt and Rainbow Mountain area has been developed, approved and is currently under construction.

Among other topics, it is anticipated that the TPWG will be working with the Cheakamus Community Forest and the Province on proposed changes to Forest Service Roads to protect and improve trailhead access. A policy also needs to be established on the use of RMOW funds to build and maintain trail infrastructure outside of municipal boundaries (i.e. the jurisdiction of Squamish Lillooet Regional District). Improving closer access to the former Singing Pass Trailhead is also on the TPWG's topic list.

Trails Summer Focus Group (June 13, 2013):

- Alpine Club of Canada – Whistler Chapter
- Whistler Off Road Cycling Association
- Recreation and Trails Sites BC (Ministry of Lands and Natural Resource Operations)
- Mountain Bike Tour Operator
- Cheakamus Community Forest
- Recreation and Leisure Advisory Committee (3 members)
- RMOW Parks Planning

Invited to Focus Group but unable to attend:

- Squamish Lillooet Regional District
- BC Parks
- Whistler Blackcomb (input was gathered separately)

## 10.2 Desired Future

*The comments below represent feedback from the community and are included for relevancy and transparency; they do not necessarily represent a municipal, partner or stakeholder commitment or intent.*

Whistler's well developed off road multi-use recreational trail network has continued to evolve through careful planning and organic growth. The network is a large part of Whistler's culture and the recreational trail options are optimized to provide an efficient range of experiences appealing to a variety of users. Residents and visitors are very satisfied with the resort community's selection and access to recreational trails of all levels. From technical single-track and networked trails through old growth forest, to the alpine access – Whistler has something for everyone.

Recreational trails are well maintained and upgrades are prioritized annually according to funding availability. The maintenance of recreational trails is a community effort with a variety of stakeholders involved in keeping the recreational trails in good condition. Recreational trailhead and wayfinding signage and maps are consistent, enhancing the user experience. New recreational trails meet the community's trail standards and take into consideration the importance of the natural environment, including sensitive wildlife habitat. Where located within the watershed, recreational trails are compatible with the 21 Mile Creek Source Water Protection Plan.

Access roads and trailheads leading to the alpine are well maintained and the RMOW continues to work with government partners to influence new road standards for Forest Service Roads. Larger recreational trail planning efforts are ongoing to ensure that the off-road recreational trail experience remains relevant, attracting a wide variety of users.

Whistler has adapted to the 2011 and 2014 changes to the US National Forest Ski Area Permit Act of 1986 which permitted American ski areas to develop summer based on-mountain recreation assets including mountain bike terrain parks and hiking trails. Whistler Blackcomb's Bike Park, as well as all other mountain biking and hiking opportunities in Whistler stand out from competing ski areas in the United States.

## 10.3 Recommended Directions

*The Recommended Directions below are a result of community engagement feedback and are not a commitment to invest. These directions will help inform decisions that are made by Council as part of the defined budget process and over the course of their ongoing deliberations.*

10.3.1 Maintain and monitor service and satisfaction levels

10.3.1.1 **Direction:** Continue to develop primarily non-motorized multi-use recreational trails.

**Rationale:** Non-motorized multi-use recreational trails are the preferred type of trail as they make best use of limited resources, are inclusive and cater to the broadest range of user groups. Generally speaking building single or exclusive use and parallel trail systems is not cost-effective and increases environmental impact, however single use recreational trails may be considered for environmental or terrain reasons.

10.3.1.2 **Direction:** Maintain user satisfaction levels of municipal recreational trails.

**Rationale:** Satisfaction levels on municipally maintained multi-use off-road recreational trails are high and maintaining these levels is important to overall resort experience.

### RECOMMENDED ACTIONS:

A. **While exploring ways to reduce costs, continue to provide a high level of maintenance on municipal recreational trails.**

**Rationale:** Maintaining the portion of existing recreational trail network that is controlled by the municipality is important to high user satisfaction levels.

10.3.2 Improve experiences

10.3.2.1 **Direction:** Improve user satisfaction levels of municipal recreational trails.

### RECOMMENDED ACTIONS:

A. **Develop and implement a standardized wayfinding and recreational trail signage package.**

**Rationale:** Existing trailhead and trail wayfinding signage is sparse, inconsistent in location, style and content, often out of date, and sometimes not adequately maintained. An integrated and standardized wayfinding and signage program can improve the user experience.

B. **Work with stakeholders to achieve a more consistent level of recreational trail quality within the Whistler area.**

**Rationale:** Many of Whistler's off-road recreational trails were built without formal permission and consequently lack regular maintenance. They also cross a variety of jurisdictions. As a result, trail quality varies widely, diminishing the experience. Organizing trail maintenance efforts between land managers and volunteer groups will improve the user experience for all.



### 10.3.2.2 *Direction: Optimize the existing recreational trail network to achieve efficiencies.*

#### RECOMMENDED ACTIONS:

#### A. *Develop a comprehensive inventory of off road recreational trails as a basis for organized management and future planning purposes.*

**Rationale:** A comprehensive inventory of trails does not exist. To understand issues and priorities, an inventory needs to be established and maintained. The inventory should include but not be limited to information on recreational trail type, length, climb, properties traversed, condition and maintenance responsibilities.

#### B. *Establish baseline and periodically update user satisfaction and utilization data.*

**Rationale:** Past municipal recreational trail planning and decision making has been largely based upon opportunity, anecdotal evidence, trends and instinct. While this has resulted in many great successes, such as the Lost Lake recreational trail network, moving forward, an evidence-based planning approach is recommended to provide detailed user information, inform decision making, and measure success.

#### C. *Optimize existing mid to lower valley network of recreational trails.*

**Rationale:** Using the trail inventory and baseline data undertake a recreational trail optimization process to achieve efficiencies at all levels. This process may result in the decommissioning of underutilized, poorly constructed, or worn out recreational trails.

#### D. *Develop a means to strategically address unsanctioned recreational trails located on municipal, crown or private lands.*

**Rationale:** While many existing off-road recreational trails were built without formal landowner permission, they are integral to the Whistler brand. Where possible, formalizing these trails will serve to protect the assets and achieve other trail quality and maintenance objectives.

### 10.3.3 Plan for new opportunities in response to resort needs and economic activities

#### 10.3.3.1 *Direction: The Trails Planning Working Group will continue to be the lead forum for all off-road recreational trail planning efforts.*

**Rationale:** The Trails Planning Working Group (TPWG) is a multi-stakeholder working group convened by municipal Council to integrate the planning of recreational hiking and mountain biking trails in the Whistler region.

#### RECOMMENDED ACTIONS:

#### A. *Coordinate and leverage resources with other organizations and volunteer groups to achieve off road recreational trail goals.*

**Rationale:** Many local stakeholders and agencies are passionate about recreational trails, which are a key element of Whistler's summer market. Coordinating trail efforts among groups will achieve desired outcomes more efficiently.

#### B. *Engage with motorized recreational trail user groups to mitigate potential user conflicts.*

**Rationale:** The municipality's Parks Use Bylaw does not permit motorized vehicles upon its trails, and the community has expressed a preference for non-motorized and low environmental impact recreation and leisure activities over motorized activities. That being said, motorized trials bikes and dirt bikes do utilize Whistler's trails. Currently the Trails Planning Working Group does not have representation from the motorized trails bike community. This gap should be filled to help prevent potential user conflicts.

#### C. *Work with stakeholders to investigate opportunities to define conditions and restrictions on the use of helicopter drops for recreational mountain biking and hiking on Rainbow and Sproatt Mountains.*

**Rationale:** The 2008 Land and Resource Management Plan both state a preference for non-motorized recreational activities in the Whistler area.

#### 10.3.3.2 *Direction: Continue to explore opportunities to improve access to existing mid and backcountry recreational trails with partners and stakeholders.*

**Rationale:** Whistler has potential to grow its recreational trail product by offering a wide variety of subalpine and alpine experiences. One of the main challenges in doing so is that the prized subalpine and alpine terrain is often a long, steep climb from parking areas and valley bottom, especially when compared to competing resorts.

Historically, Forest Service Roads provided relatively easy access to higher elevation trailheads and key mid and backcountry destinations, but over time these have either been decommissioned, left unmaintained or deteriorated. Improving access to these trailheads will help to diversify offerings, reclaim other hard-to-access natural assets, and meet a growing demand for half to three quarter day trail opportunities.

#### RECOMMENDED ACTIONS:

##### A. *With partners develop a prioritized Forest Service Road and gate access strategy.*

**Rationale:** Many local Forest Service Roads that provide access to key recreational trailheads or other important middle or backcountry destinations are not useable by typical rental and two-wheel drive vehicles. The RMOW has an opportunity to work with partners to prioritize, improve and retain access to key assets. This aligns with opportunities identified by the Rivers Focus Group convened for the RLMP process.

##### B. *With partners develop improved access to the Singing Pass trail in Garibaldi Provincial Park.*

**Rationale:** A 1990's landslide above Fitzsimmons Creek eliminated vehicle access to Garibaldi Park's popular Singing Pass trailhead. Currently hikers are required to hike an additional 3.8 kilometers, and gain an additional 530 metres of elevation to access the old trailhead. This additional effort dissuades many hikers.

Restoring vehicle access to the former trailhead is not a practical option due to terrain and the landslide. Restoring vehicle access to the north end of the slip may be possible however it would require the support of Whistler Blackcomb as the route travels through the Bike Park.

Alternatively, there may be an opportunity to provide improved access on the other side of Fitzsimmons Creek. This would require developing an access agreement with all the relevant stakeholders including Whistler Blackcomb, Whistler Sport Legacies Society, Ziptrek Eco tours, and Innergex Renewable Energy Inc. as owners of the hydroelectric facility.

The 2014 Garibaldi Park Management Plan Amendment for the Spearhead Area contains strategies consistent with this action.

##### C. *Continue to explore dialogue opportunities with BC Parks to allow cross-country mountain biking trail access to the Singing Pass area of Garibaldi Provincial Park.*

**Rationale:** The 2014 Garibaldi Park Management Plan Amendment for the Spearhead Area introduced new objectives to study the development, use and impacts of high elevation cross-country mountain-biking trails in other areas, and to undertake an assessment of the feasibility of mountain biking in the Spearhead area. The RMOW and other key stakeholders are identified in the document as important to the study and assessment work.

##### 10.3.3.3 *Direction: Consider new recreational trails in response to resort demands, opportunities, gaps and network optimization.*

**Rationale:** Whistler's proximity to alpine terrain is an excellent opportunity to provide a distinctive recreational trail product when compared to competing resorts. Competition is expected to increase with the relatively recent changes to the US National Forest Ski Area Permit Act of 1986 that permit a broader range of summer recreation uses in 122 ski areas in the United States.

Following optimization process, new recreational trails may be required to connect existing trails to maximize efficiencies and provide an improved user product.

Demand in Lost Lake may be beginning to undermine user experience and the municipality may wish to consider developing similar trails elsewhere in the valley.

#### RECOMMENDED ACTIONS:

##### A. *With appropriate agencies continue to implement a phased non-motorized multi-use recreational alpine trail network in the Sproatt/Rainbow area that considers environmental, watershed, tenure, and user attributes.*

**Rationale:** Whistler has the opportunity to develop a measured network of alpine dual use hiking and mountain biking trails in the Sproatt/Rainbow Mountain area. From a hiking perspective this would be beneficial in providing a no cost alpine product connecting many significant landmarks. From a mountain biking perspective it would provide a no cost alpine trail riding experience unique to the region. This would help differentiate Whistler from many of its competitors. Any existing or contemplated trails within the watershed should be consistent with the 21 Mile Creek Source Water Protection Plan.

**B. Consider developing an extended network of interconnected alpine recreational trails and hut-to-hut possibilities on the west side of the valley.**

**Rationale:** Whistler has the long-term opportunity to develop a network of interconnected trails from Cougar Mountain and Ancient Cedars through to Brandywine Meadows. If implemented, these trails could build upon the anticipated success of the potential Spearhead hut-to-hut project and further Whistler's reputation as an international hiking and biking destination. Trail development would likely occur after return on investment data is obtained.

**C. Explore opportunities for development of an off road Sea to Sky Recreational Trail connection between the CalCheak Recreation Site and the Whistler Bungee Bridge.**

**Rationale:** As an interim condition, the Sea to Sky Recreational Trail currently utilizes 2.3 kilometre portion of the Daisy Lake Forest Service Road to connect these two points. Ideally this segment would be located off of the relatively busy Forest Service Road to provide an improved user experience.

**Rationale:** In addition to longer distance trails and loop trails, clustered recreational trails forming their own network are a popular attraction and an efficient means of increasing recreational trail assets. The recreational trails in Lost Lake and the Whistler Interpretative Forest are prime examples. Reports of congestion and over use are arising in Lost Lake, and there is increasing demand for intermediate level trails elsewhere in the Valley.

Feedback received through previous mountain bike recreational trail planning, as well as the Official Community Plan and RLMP engagement processes identified several potential areas including the east side of the valley between Whistler Interpretative Forest and Creekside, within the Whistler Interpretative Forest itself, the Jane Lakes area, and north of Lost Lake Park using the new Sea to Sky Recreational Trail as main access/egress artery. Confirming these areas would help to harness volunteer and rogue efforts in a directed way.

**D. Consider development of a Type 2 level recreational trail that loops the Whistler valley at a mid-valley elevation.**

**Rationale:** Portions of the Flank, Sea to Sky, Whistler Interpretative Forest and other recreational trails could be improved and connected with new segments to provide an intermediate level recreational trail encircling the Whistler valley. This unique loop experience would be easily accessible from a variety of starting points, connect to key destinations and access points, and offer a range of views and experiences of the Whistler valley.

Survey results demonstrate that Type 2 trails (i.e. one to 1.5-metre wide gravel trail, such as Molly Hogan in Lost Lake or the Sea to Sky Recreational Trail) are a preferred trail type appealing to the broadest range of user abilities and activities (e.g. walking, hiking, jogging, mountain biking).

**10.3.3.4 Direction: Plan for growth in electric assist bikes.**

**Rationale:** Electric assist bikes are a growing trend in Europe and have started to appear in Whistler. Their popularity is tied to technological advances, Whistler's steep and hilly terrain, and aging demographics. In Whistler it is anticipated these types of bikes will become popular to rent or own. Trail planning and management should take these into consideration.

**10.3.4 Support the Whistler brand**

**10.3.4.1 Direction: Increase exposure and promotion of off-road recreational trails through marketing and collaboration with resort partners and provincial tourism organizations.**

**Rationale:** Whistler's off-road recreational trails are themselves an attraction as well an economic driver for the resort. There is a potential to increase the economic impact to the resort through exposure and promotion.

**10.3.4.2 Direction: Explore opportunities to develop a topographical map that shows local mountains and recreational trails.**

**Rationale:** According to feedback, many of Whistler's European visitors have requested detailed and accurate topographical trail maps, which are the norm in Europe as well in some of Whistler's competitors. There is an opportunity to improve visitor experience and increase exposure of local recreational trails through the development of an appropriate map.



10.3.5 Enhance administration, internal documents and processes

10.3.5.1 **Direction:** Consider updating the Whistler Trail Standards document.

**Rationale:** The RMOW developed a Whistler Trails Standard document over 10 years ago to help guide recreational trail development. This document, which was based on International Mountain Bike Association (IMBA) practices and was tailored to Whistler's geography, has served as a template for other jurisdictions elsewhere in North America and Europe. It now needs to be updated to reflect new construction techniques and strategies for multi-use, non-motorized and alpine recreational trails. For consistency purposes consideration should also be given to provincial recreational trail construction standards and revised editions of IMBA's Trail Solutions.

**RECOMMENDED ACTIONS:**

**A. Develop a long term Recreational Trail Plan for inclusion in a future Official Community Plan update.**

**Rationale:** Development of such a plan would focus efforts in a strategic way.

**B. Ensure that recreational trail planning meets trail standards and respects the natural environment.**

**Rationale:** Our natural environment serves as the foundation for the Whistler brand. All new recreational trails proposed should take sensitive wildlife, alpine, riparian and other environmental considerations into account.

**C. Direction: Develop a recreational trail naming convention.**

**Rationale:** A recreational trail naming convention would serve to place boundaries and provide clarity on appropriate trail names. Whistler does not currently have such a policy for recreational trails. A policy for park naming was recently established.

10.3.5.2 **Direction:** Discuss with other land management agencies opportunities to enhance visitor experiences within their recreational trails and related natural assets.

**Rationale:** There are a number of non-municipal recreational trails and natural assets within and in close proximity to the municipal boundaries that contribute to the larger recreational experience and sense of place. In some instances these recreational trails appear somewhat uncared for due to reduced maintenance. Restoring these recreational trails and providing a more consistent experience would broaden the resort's offerings and improve the visitor experience. This aligns with opportunities identified in section 1 of the RLMP, The Whistler brand, and by the Rivers Focus Group convened for the RLMP process.



# 11 Winter Nordic and Snow Shoe Recreational Trails

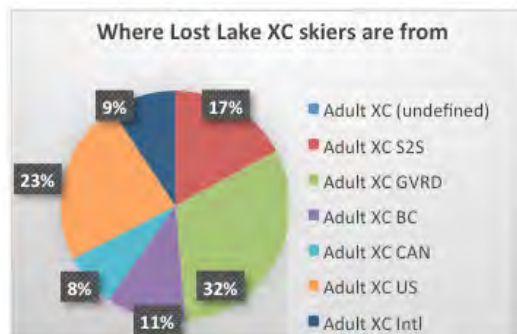
## 11.1 Current Reality

Most of Whistler's winter trail activity is focused around two cross-country ski and snowshoe venues: Lost Lake Park and Ski Callaghan, the latter a union of Whistler Olympic Park and Callaghan Country Wilderness Adventures. For the purposes of the RLMP only the municipally operated Lost Lake Cross-Country and Snowshoe Trails have been examined.

Lost Lake Cross-Country and Snowshoe Trails allow residents and visitors to experience winter in Whistler from an entirely different perspective. The trails are a superb location for cross-country skiing or snowshoeing in a quiet, wooded setting easily accessible from Whistler Village. The narrower, traditional trails provide intimacy and a contrast from the wider Ski Callaghan trail network.

The trail system offers 34 kilometres of groomed and track-set trails for both skate and classic style with 4 kilometres lit for night skiing. 15 kilometres of maintained snowshoe trails are also open to the public during daylight hours. The Lost Lake system is closed to pedestrians, dogs, and cyclists during ski operations. Lost Lake Cross-country enhances the appeal of Whistler as a four-season destination, because it adds to the community's diversified recreation offerings. The trails are accessible to community members and visitors of all ages at a range of price points.

The charts below highlight the range of users on the Lost Lake trails, the majority of whom are visitors to Whistler.



For the benchmark season of 2012/2013, total revenue from Lost Lake was over \$423,000 including: \$368,000 in revenue from cross-country tickets or passes and \$55,000 in revenue from snowshoe tickets or passes. About 8,600 cross-country day tickets, 4,300 cross-country night tickets and 5,700 snowshoe tickets were sold, while 722 cross-country season passes (including dual area passes) were sold. There were approximately 32,000 visits during the season, including pass holders; 80 percent were cross-country skiers (accounting for 25,700 visits) and the remaining 20 percent were snowshoers (6,500 visits). The table below outlines year over year comparisons.

	Seasonal Notes	Season's Passes		Day Tickets	Night Tickets	Snowshoe Tickets	Total Sales Revenue	XC Skier Visits	Snowshoe Visits
		Numbers	Sales						
<b>2010/2011</b>	1st year out of PassivHaus 119 days Open in Valley Open Dec 1 - April 9 Average Season	656	\$ 98,306.09	\$ 118,344.27	\$ 14,185.44	\$ 27,081.29	\$ 257,917.09	16,817	5,925
<b>2011/2012</b>	112 days Open in Valley Open Dec 3 - April 1 Average Season	522	\$ 125,892.71	\$ 137,428.25	\$ 18,097.10	\$ 40,433.14	\$ 322,042.06	19,584	5,097
<b>2012/2013</b>	Above Average Season 119 days Open in Valley Open Dec 15 - April 9 Still 3 ft of snow in valley Apr 9	722	\$ 131,403.38	\$ 202,124.63	\$ 34,675.30	\$ 55,519.57	\$ 423,722.88	25,702	6,453
<b>2013/2014</b>	70 days Open in Valley Open Jan 14 - Mar 30 Low snow year late start; missed Xmas	583	\$ 113,340.74	\$ 77,237.56	\$ 12,812.39	\$ 24,714.13	\$ 228,104.82	15,197	3,176
<b>2014/2015</b>	42 days Open in Valley Open Dec 29 - Feb 7 2nd Poor Snow year; warm & wet 20% discount given on passes	634	\$ 92,658.23	\$ 43,776.94	\$ 7,821.56	\$ 8,787.74	\$ 153,044.47	13,727	2,049

\* Low snow years and not being able to commence operations for the Holiday Season creates large drops in Total Revenue

The RMOW operates Lost Lake Cross-Country using a collaborative approach. The development of the Lost Lake PassivHaus served as an opportunity for a third-party business, currently the Cross-Country Connection, to use the space for ticket sales, rentals, lessons, tours and operation of a cafe.

The Meadow Park to Rainbow Park Valley Trail and High School to Nicklaus North Valley Trail are considered multi-use trails as they are open to the public with no trail fee. They are groomed and track set as time permits. Dogs and owners are welcome to ski, snowshoe, walk or cycle these sections of multi-use trail at no cost.

RMOW operations include seasons pass sales, offsite ticket sales, grooming, installation and removal of all ski and snowshoe trail signage, trail maintenance, risk management, first-aid response, paid and volunteer patrol program, marketing, building maintenance and assisting in special event planning.

The RMOW has also taken a collaborative approach with Ski Callaghan by offering a dual-area pass. This offers pass holders over 125 kilometres of trails with a range of beginner to intermediate tracks on a spectacular variety of terrain.

Trails Winter Focus Group (April 11, 2013):

- Whistler Nordics XC Ski Club
- Cross Country Connection – existing PassivHaus concession operator
- Blackcomb Snowmobile – existing Lost Lake Park snowshoe tour operator
- Recreation and Leisure Advisory Committee (3 members)
- RMOW Cross Country Staff
- RMOW Parks Planning

Invited to Focus Group but unable to attend:

- Fairmont Chateau Golf Course
- Nicklaus North Golf Course



## 11.2 Desired Future

*The comments below represent feedback from the community and are included for relevancy and transparency; they do not necessarily represent a municipal, partner or stakeholder commitment or intent.*

Whistler's municipal winter trails network is focused around the Lost Lake Cross-Country and Snowshoe Trails and continues to add to the appeal of Whistler as a four-season destination. Cross promotion and ongoing dialogue with Ski Callaghan help to grow the product offering and ensure the broadest provision of opportunities.

The Lost Lake trails are a user fee-based system accessible to skiers and snowshoers and maintained by the municipality to ensure a high quality, safe skiing experience. Walkers, dogs and cyclists are not permitted for safety reasons, and there are ample opportunities for these activities elsewhere in the community. Maintenance and grooming the trails occur throughout the winter, and summer maintenance helps to alleviate winter issues. A variety of day and evening programs contribute to the draw of the Lost Lake Trails.

As the popularity of Nordic sports increases, the number of cross-country ski and snowshoe trail users has increased due to careful planning efforts, sport trends, and product momentum generated through collaboration with Ski Callaghan.

Resort visitors are aware of the close proximity of the Lost Lake trails thanks to increased marketing, improved pedestrian links from Whistler Village to the PassivHaus, and improved services at the PassivHaus.

## 11.3 Recommended Directions

*The Recommended Directions below are a result of community engagement feedback and are not a commitment to invest. These directions will help inform decisions that are made by Council as part of the defined budget process and over the course of their ongoing deliberations.*

### 11.3.1 Maintain and monitor service and satisfaction levels

#### 11.3.1.1 **Direction:** Continue to maintain high user satisfaction levels with an efficient service delivery model.

**Rationale:** Satisfaction levels on Whistler's network of Nordic and snowshoe trails at Lost Lake Park are high. Maintaining these levels is important to the overall resort experience.

#### **RECOMMENDED ACTIONS:**

#### **A. Continue exploring ways to reduce costs while providing a high quality product.**

**Rationale:** Maintaining high user satisfaction levels are critical to facility success. Based on feedback from various stakeholder groups, and as trail grooming is core to the cross-country ski experience, the quality of the skiing experience benefitted substantially from additional grooming resources provided midway during the 2012/2013 season. This equated to three full-time equivalents grooming staff, and moving forward, it is recommended that this level be sustained.

#### **B. Continue investment in Lost Lake Trails safety systems.**

**Rationale:** A culture of continuous improvement, particularly with regard to safety, is a healthy practice. At the Lost Lake Cross-country Ski trails this could include consistent signage with safety messaging through various snow conditions, snowmobile modifications and training program, and additional first-aid training for staff and volunteers.

#### **C. For safety reasons, continue to not permit dogs, pedestrians, and bicycles on the Lost Lake Cross-country and Snowshoe trails.**

**Rationale:** Based on feedback from stakeholder groups and users, participants have paid for a quality product free of dogs, pedestrians and, each of which have a detrimental effect on safety, trail quality and user experience. Cross-country skiing, snowshoeing with dog opportunities, and cycling exist elsewhere in the community at no cost to dog owners.

**D. Consider additional snow stockpiling to extend season length and mitigate warm weather impacts on trails**

**Rationale:** Depending on the year, the Nordic ski season at Lost Lake can be relatively short and be impacted at any time by periods of warm rainy weather. The RMOW currently stockpiles snow in the heart of the snow season to address end of the season issues. There is a desire to see this program enhanced with more stockpiling throughout the season and gathering clean snow from other locations within the municipality. The support and teamwork sustained through inter-departmental efforts can bring this program forward. Nordic venues elsewhere stockpile snow to advance and guarantee opening dates.

**E. Consider snow making to help assure Nordic start date, extend season length and mitigate warm weather impacts on trails.**

**Rationale:** Depending on the year, the start date of Nordic operations can vary greatly, commencing as early as November and as late as mid-January. The length of season also varies significantly due the vulnerability of valley snow with warmer temperatures. Currently, the RMOW stockpiles and transports snow to the trail network throughout the operating season to fill in locations that get very thin in order to help extend the season.

To help understand how snow making could help mitigate the above concerns and in recognition of the need to replace existing aging lighting infrastructure within the next few years, a feasibility study was performed in 2014 by Snow Mountain Project Incorporated for Lost Lake Park. The study determined that the incremental cost to install water and upgraded power infrastructure was estimated at approximately \$1 million for a phased installation of snowmaking infrastructure and equipment for approximately 4.5 km of trails.

The report conceptualized a snow making plan that basically involves bringing water down from the Blackcomb Creek intake into the Lost Lake parking lot area. This could generate enough water pressure to run a portable snow gun, while providing an opportunity for the installation of either a 37 KW or 100 KW micro hydro station that would generate estimated annual revenues of \$29,000 and \$57,000 per year respectively. Further due diligence on the micro hydro portion of this project, the business case analysis and the socioeconomic impacts of such infrastructure must be considered with additional stakeholder engagement prior to moving forward with the concept.

**11.3.2 Improve experiences**

**11.3.2.1 Direction: Focus customer service improvements in areas with lower user satisfaction through increased services and amenities.**

**Rationale:** While satisfaction levels are generally high, there are areas where visitors, concession operators, the Whistler Nordic Ski Club, and other residents expressed lower satisfaction levels, which could be addressed to improve the experience.

**RECOMMENDED ACTIONS:**

**A. Plan for PassivHaus improvements and enhancements.**

**Rationale:** The RMOW is exploring ways to improve and enhance the PassiveHaus facility. According to engagement feedback, the existing washrooms within the PassiveHaus are oversubscribed and only open during concession hours. There is a desire to provide larger and more easily accessible year round washrooms at the entrance to Whistler's largest park. Also, there is a desire to explore a potential liquor license and create a larger teaching area near the facility. Additional programming options such as yoga and special events have also been suggested to increase awareness and generate excitement for the activities and area.

**B. Explore additional summer trail maintenance to improve winter trail quality.**

**Rationale:** Summer trail grooming will result in improved winter trail conditions and experience, and reduce winter maintenance efforts. Summer grooming could include select tree pruning and species removal to reduce leaf litter, tree planting to shade overly exposed areas, and redirecting spring runoff that accelerates snowpack deterioration. Trail grading on rockier terrain could also aid in the ability to keep certain trail access points open longer throughout the season and provide a larger skiable network for a greater amount of time.

**C. Consider options to reduce gravel accumulating on trails from overpass roads.**

**Rationale:** During road snow clearing process gravel is thrown off of the overpasses by Terry Roger Bridge near the PassiveHaus onto the ski trails. Addressing this would improve the user experience and winter trail quality. Examples of solutions are the structures located on the Valley Trail at the Creekside underpass of Highway 99 or along the access road within Whistler Olympic Park.

**D. Continue to explore, and where possible implement methods of reducing user conflicts.**

**Rationale:** Trail walkers, ice fishers and cyclists that have not paid the access fee compromise the paid experience and impact trail quality and safety. This primarily occurs at the Lost Lake Warming Hut area and Spruce Grove Park. An awareness program to highlight where these activities are permitted could help mitigate such conflicts.

**11.3.2.2 Improve signage and wayfinding to and within Lost Lake Cross-Country Ski and Snowshoe Trail network to benefit residents and visitors.**

**Rationale:** According to user feedback, the current signage is inconsistent and the maps could be improved to make them more user friendly.

**11.3.2.3 Consider improvements and additional programming to maximize use of the warming hut.**

**Rationale:** The warming hut at Lost Lake beach is underutilized and an opportunity to add value to the existing cross-country ski and snowshoe product. Options for private rentals or monthly fondue nights could improve user numbers and add to the experience.

**11.3.2.4 Consider improving pedestrian links from Whistler Village to the PassivHaus and to the Upper Village to increase exposure of the Lost Lake trail network.**

**Rationale:** According to stakeholders, many visitors may not be aware of the Lost Lake trails' proximity to the Village, and this could be addressed by providing improved pedestrian links and signage to other resort attractions such as the Squamish Lil'wat Cultural Centre, the Audain Art Museum, and the Upper Village.

This direction is aligned with the municipality's Cultural Connector project, which seeks to better connect six cultural institutions in the Village: the Squamish Lil'wat Cultural Centre, PassivHaus, Audain Art Museum, Millennium Place, Whistler Public Library and the Whistler Museum and Archives.

**11.3.3 Plan for new opportunities in response to resort needs and economic activities**

**11.3.3.1 Direction: Optimize the existing Nordic trail network to achieve efficiencies and identify opportunities.**

**RECOMMENDED ACTIONS:**

**A. Establish baseline and periodically update user satisfaction, needs and utilization data.**

**Rationale:** An evidence-based planning approach would provide detailed user information to inform decision making, confirm funding sources, and measure success.

**B. Optimize use of existing Lost Lake Cross-country and Snow Shoe trail network.**

**Rationale:** Using collected baseline data and studying the carrying capacity of individual trail, undertake a ski and snowshoe trail optimization process. This would seek to achieve efficiencies and identify opportunities to add value at little or no cost.

**C. Explore expanding night skiing opportunities in the Lost Lake trail network.**

**Rationale:** Following the baseline and trail optimization works, consider opportunities to expand night skiing. Currently the Lost Lake trail system offers four of 34 kilometres lit for night skiing. According to engagement, local stakeholders would like to see lighting expanded to Helen's Corner and potentially to Nicklaus North, and/or create a small loop upon Lost Lake when ice conditions permit.

**11.3.3.2 Explore new technology opportunities for the Lost Lake Cross-country Trails.**

**Rationale:** According to feedback, there is an opportunity for technology to enhance the user experience through the provision of a pass product. This may include the ability to purchase seasons passes online, as well as making cross-country passes interactive with times, phone payment options, etc. Another idea is the use of real time grooming reports, as used at many other Nordic venues including Whistler Olympic Park.

**11.3.3.3 Consider the feasibility of increasing Lost Lake adult evening programs.**

**Rationale:** According to feedback, evening adult programs fill up and there is an opportunity to add more to meet demand.



#### 11.3.4 Support the Whistler brand

##### 11.3.4.1 **Direction:** Increase exposure and promotion of Nordic trails through marketing and collaboration with resort partners.

**Rationale:** Nordic trails are themselves an attraction, as well an economic driver to the resort. There is a potential to increase the economic impact to the resort through exposure and promotion. Stakeholders have suggested that exposure could be increased by further leveraging the Olympic legacy experience at Whistler Olympic Park, promoting snowshoeing which appeals to an aging demographic, and advertising with Whistler Blackcomb. Greater in-resort marketing at hotels and activity centres could also help drive visitors to the area.

##### 11.3.4.2 **Explore opportunities to designate select cross-country ski routes as favourites of nationally recognized cross-country and biathlon athletes.**

**Rationale:** Designating particular loops as a famous Canadian athlete's favourite loop could help raise the facility's profile and add to the fun factor. It could also be used to direct users to lesser used trails, thereby relieving congestion and maintenance pressures on high use trails.



# WHISTLER LAKES AND RIVERS





## 12 Lakes

### 12.1 Current Reality

Resident and visitors throughout the summer months enjoy Whistler's lakes. Primarily these include Alta, Alpha, Nita, Green, Lost and Loggers lakes. Senior levels of government control the lakes themselves, while generally speaking the municipality controls the majority of lake access points. All of the lakes are used for a variety of general recreational purposes. 2014 Tourism Whistler surveys indicate that 27 percent of summer visitors visit a municipal park, the majority of which are located on our lakes. Electric motor powered vessels are permitted on Alpha, Lost and Nita Lakes, and a speed restriction applies on Alta Lake (12 km/hr) and on portions of Green Lake.

#### Alta Lake

With its warm waters and central location, Alta Lake is the most diversely used of Whistler lakes. Six municipal resort parks are on its shores (Rainbow, Lakeside, Blueberry, Wayside, Alta, and the former hostel site). Most parks include rentable boat storage racks for residents. The park beaches are safe for swimming and there are docks at key swim areas. The water quality of major beaches is monitored closely; however duck (swimmer's) itch is a problem during periods of hot dry weather. To this end, educational information and showers are offered at Alta Lake's waterfront parks. Feces from geese are another regular complaint, and the municipality is taking steps to reduce geese populations and impacts.

Several local organizations actively use Alta Lake. These include commercial businesses such as Whistler Eco Tours and Backroads Whistler, as well as non-profits such as the Whistler Sailing Association (WSA), Whistler Tri Club and the Whistler Rowing Club (WRC). The WSA and WRC are relatively new to Whistler. Both are self-governing and are proactive in managing users and communicating best practices to visiting groups. The WRC has also established a route around the lake and regularly shares information with other lake users. The commercial businesses offer guiding and watercraft rental services. Part of their offerings is an ability to travel down the River of Golden Dreams to Green Lake, guided or unguided. Please also refer to section 13.0, Rivers.

The only vehicle trailer access point is at Carleton Way in Alta Vista. Historically there was congestion and conflict at this location. Improved management and user awareness has significantly improved the situation. It is thought that additional vehicle access would likely result in increased lake use. Smaller watercraft users often carry their vessel by hand to the lake via the access through parks.

Recently there has been an increase in the number of lake swimmers with athletes training for the annual IRONMAN Canada event. This has presented an increased risk of conflict between swimmers and boaters, more specifically rowers. Safety concerns have been mitigated through further engagement with user groups and the installation of use specific marker buoys.



Also occurring on the lake are party barges, which are typically slow moving motorized docks that travel the lake carrying groups of individuals for an on-barge barbeque or other informal festivities. Over time these have been increasing in number and size. Anecdotally noise concerns from party barges have been increasing. Relatively new occurrences on Alta Lake are larger live-aboard yachts and sailboats. In 2014 the municipality introduced a new bylaw to prevent residential vessel use on Whistler's lakes.

Stand up paddleboards are the newest user of the lake and are growing in number. These have a very small impact to lake as do the few windsurfers who access the lake through Rainbow Park on windy days.

### **Green Lake**

Green Lake is the largest and coldest of Whistler's lakes. With one public vehicle trailer access launch site in Emerald Estates, it suffers similar access challenges to Alta Lake. There are two opportunities to provide smaller vessel access by hand – at the Summer Place cul-de-sac, and from land dedicated as park between north and south Summer Lane.

The lake is used by power watercraft and floatplanes. River raft guiding companies also use the lake to access the Green River for guided tours. Some of the River of Golden Dream tours can arrive in Green Lake and paddle to the Edgewater property to pull out; however for the rest, boat take out on the lake is a challenge, so this usually occurs upstream of Green Lake. Recent ownership changes to the Edgewater property may impact take out opportunities.

Green Lake Park provides a small public park on the shores of the lake in Emerald Estates. Fitzsimmons Fan is a unique alluvial fan created by Fitzsimmons Creek which possesses important bird and waterfowl habitat while offering a unique lake perspective. A cedar rail fences divides the public use area from the bird nesting habitat to increase nesting success. Fitzsimmons Fan has also become a de facto dog off-leash area and is occasionally used for special events like weddings and yoga classes.

### **Alpha Lake**

Alpha Lake offers a complex and interesting shoreline and is dotted with the occasional island. Alpha Lake Park is located on its northern shores, and Pine Point Park is a natural and undeveloped peninsula projecting into the lake offering tremendous views. A shallow portion of the lake has in-filled with aquatic vegetation as the lake moves through its natural life cycle.

### **Nita Lake**

Nita Lake is a small lake in a dramatic setting. While its colder waters tend to dissuade all but the hardiest of swimmers, it is a popular spot for fishing and nature appreciation. A number of small parks accessible only by water exist along its western shoreline.

### **Lost Lake**

Lost Lake is a popular lake despite its lack of summer vehicle access. Located relatively close to the Village, most of its summer users arrive by bike, on foot, or by free public transit shuttle. The lake includes several swimming docks, a clothing optional dock, and a dog off-leash area.

A small prepackaged food and beverage concession operates during the summer months. Lost Lake also offers a large bookable event space. Commercial watercraft rental has not been permitted here in order to maintain the tranquil nature of the lake.

### **Loggers Lake**

Located in the Whistler Interpretive Forest and under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Forests, Loggers Lake is within a historical volcanic crater. It is a generally undeveloped, apart from a modest trail encircling the lake, a small dock, and a nearby outhouse. Use, including unsanctioned camping, is increasing rapidly resulting in impacts to shoreline and understory vegetation as well as Forest Service Road conflicts and some potential safety issues. The municipality does not have direct control over access, but is working with the province to develop a shared management approach.

Watercraft Focus Group\* (April 30, 2013):

- Whistler Sailing Association
- Whistler Rowing Club
- Wedge Rafting
- Backroads Whistler
- Recreation and Leisure Advisory Committee (4 members)
- RMOW Parks Operations
- RMOW Parks Planning

Invited to Focus Group but unable to attend:

- Whistler Tri Club
- \* This group primarily focused on Alta and Green Lakes

## 12.2 Desired Future

*The comments below represent feedback from the community and are included for relevancy and transparency; they do not necessarily represent a municipal, partner or stakeholder commitment or intent.*

Whistler's lakes and beaches offer great outdoor experiences for all ages. Due in part to maintenance, new infrastructure, and newly acquired waterfront lands, user satisfaction levels continue to remain high. With well-maintained sandy beaches, grassy parks, kids play areas, barbeques and a variety of concession stands, Whistler's lakes keep families entertained all day long.

The popularity of Whistler's lakes and water sports has increased, bringing more events to the lakes. To prevent scheduling conflicts, an online event calendar manages demand. Ongoing monitoring for potential user conflicts ensures all users can enjoy Whistler's lakes.

Sunny weather draws enthusiastic crowds to lakes and thanks to clear signage, corresponding bylaws with enforcement, and an annual lake and waterway public etiquette information campaign, rowdy behavior is not an issue.

Lost Lake continues to not have commercial watercraft rental operations to preserve the lake's tranquil character.

Beaches continue to be a major summer attraction with great amenities for families. Life's a beach in Whistler.

## 12.3 Recommended Directions

*The Recommended Directions below are a result of community engagement feedback and are not a commitment to invest. These directions will help inform decisions that are made by Council as part of the defined budget process and over the course of their ongoing deliberations.*

12.3.1 Maintain and monitor service and satisfaction levels

12.3.1.1 **Direction:** Continue to help manage and direct use of lakes to maintain high satisfaction levels.

### RECOMMENDED ACTIONS:

**A. Consider creating an annual public information communications plan to educate residents and visitors about lake and waterway etiquette.**

**Rationale:** Lakes are hugely popular in warm weather and with the goal of reducing conflicts a public information campaign would be helpful. Topics could include what motor restriction and bans are currently in place, corresponding bylaws, and reminders about responsible use and safety.

**B. Work with government partners to consider further restrictions and possibly a ban on motorized watercraft on Alta Lake to maintain the lake's experiential quality.**

**Rationale:** Potential growth of motorized use could undermine lake experience and be difficult to manage. A formalized ban ensures that current uses can be maintained safely. Rescue and sailing support boats would be exempt.

**C. Continue to monitor the potential for inappropriate use and user conflicts on lakes.**

**Rationale:** As the popularity of lakes and water sports increases, there is an increased risk of conflicts between users. For example, the increase of triathletes training for the IRONMAN Canada event created the potential for conflict between swimmers and boaters (particularly rowers). Although this was addressed, other examples include the increasing number, size and noise of party barges also in Alta Lake.

**D. Continue to not permit commercial watercraft rental at Lost Lake.**

**Rationale:** Lost Lake is a small lake offering a unique experience that would be affected by commercial watercraft rental.

**12.3.1.2 Direction: Continue to restrict vehicle access to Lost Lake park beach area during peak summer months.**

**Rationale:** The lack of convenient vehicle access to the beach area of Lost Lake Park during peak summer months helps maintain reasonable use levels. Increasing access would undermine the user experience and the relatively tranquil nature of the lake.

**12.3.1.3 Direction: Continue to monitor the health of our lakes.**

**Rationale:** Lakes are key summer assets. Continuing to monitor water quality and eutrophication rates (natural infilling process) is important to maintain high user satisfaction levels.

**12.3.2 Improve experiences**

**RECOMMENDED ACTIONS:**

**A. Continue to monitor for swimmer's itch and take further action if the situation worsens.**

**B. Consider developing an annual event calendar and booking procedure for lake users.**

**Rationale:** As the popularity of lakes and water sports increases, there is a potential for more events, which could bring visitors to the resort. To prevent scheduling conflicts, and increase the success of each event, a booking and cancellation procedure could be considered.

**C. Where appropriate provide additional watercraft storage racks.**

**Rationale:** Watercraft storage racks are often over-subscribed. Provision of additional seasonal rental space would alleviate demand and improve convenience. Consideration should also be given for secure stand up paddleboard storage lockers.

**D. Explore the feasibility of offering additional outdoor ice skating opportunities.**

**Rationale:** Currently ice skating occurs informally on lakes when conditions permit. Users have indicated a desire for a more formal, municipally supported system.

**12.3.3 Plan for new opportunities in response to resort needs and economic activities**

**12.3.3.1 Direction: Consider developing a waterfront access strategy.**

**Rationale:** As the popularity of lakes increases in summer, a long-term strategy could explore opportunities to potentially improve or add additional access space primarily at Alta and Green Lakes. Improved access may result in increased lake use, which may or may not be desirable.

**12.3.3.2 Explore opportunities for the provision of indoor social, boat maintenance, and storage facilities adjacent to Alta Lake.**

**Rationale:** An easily accessible indoor space to maintain and store boats would help facilitate water sports club growth. A social club space provides opportunities for community interaction and is almost as important as the lake activity itself. Suitable locations are limited.

**12.3.4 Enhance administration, internal documents and processes**

**12.3.4.1 Direction: Encourage the delivery of an enhanced and consistent quality of recreational experience across jurisdictions.**

**Rationale:** There are a number of lakes within and in close proximity to the municipal boundaries that contribute to the larger Whistler brand and are managed by a variety of jurisdictions. Collaborating with these other agencies would strengthen the resident and visitor experience.





## 13 Rivers

### 13.1 Current Reality

Particularly in the summer, Whistler's rivers become playgrounds for rafters, canoeists and kayakers alike. With several significant rivers nearby, there is everything from whitewater to slow meandering streams. There is also an active fishing community using many of the rivers and streams throughout the spring, summer and fall. See section 14.

The River of Golden Dreams is a popular family-friendly canoeing and kayaking route that links Alta Lake and Green Lake. The meandering 5 kilometre route is a signature resort asset. Local businesses offer guided tours and boat rentals for use on this route. In the last few years, there have been numerous complaints from the public and tour operators regarding drinking and littering along the River of Golden Dreams. The RCMP and municipal Bylaw Services have been monitoring all of Whistler's rivers and lakes for violations throughout the summer.

Occasionally, during hot and dry summers, water levels drop particularly on the River of Golden Dreams, which can impact the river bottom and fish spawning. Commercial operators have an agreed to point at which they portage boats around the sensitive reaches.

According to the local and regional kayaking community, the Whistler region offers a complete range of whitewater kayaking opportunities with unprecedented ease of access and water reliability. Opportunities include Callaghan, Upper Cheakamus, Green, Soo, and to a lesser degree the Ashlu, Squamish, Lower Cheakamus, and the Upper Elaho rivers. Rutherford Creek used to be included in this list, but it is no longer useable because of the Independent Power Project (IPP) – the whitewater facility constructed as part of the IPP has proven to be unusable. Businesses offer whitewater rafting trips down local waterways with put-ins within driving distance to Whistler Village.

In the international kayaking community, the portion of Callaghan Creek from 3.5 kilometre upstream of Highway 99 to Cal Cheak campground is recognized as an exceptional whitewater amenity, and from the group's perspective it possesses very high recreation values. What makes it exceptional is the length of season (from April to November), consistent water levels and flow, technical challenge, scenery, ease of access, and vertical drop. The other amenities in the region are very good; however, this is deemed exceptional. This reach is within RMOW boundaries.

For the same reach, the Ministry of Forest Lands and Natural Resource Operations has issued an investigative license to Callaghan Creek Hydro Limited Partnership to investigate waterpower project opportunities. The local kayaking community recognizes that hydro power is necessary for society. Their position is that hydroelectric developments should not drastically undermine existing kayaking experiences. The Ashlu River is cited as a positive example, while Rutherford Creek is cited as a negative example.

Unfortunately, in meeting with the Licensee the local kayak community has learnt that there is no opportunity for kayak mitigation with a Callaghan Creek Independent Power Project, because of the nature of the river (flows, vertical). For the whitewater community this is their primary issue.

Rivers Focus Group (July 31, 2013):

- Wedge Rafting
- Three members of the local and regional kayaking community
- Recreation and Leisure Advisory Committee (1 member)
- RMOW Parks Planning

Invited to Focus Group but unable to attend:

- Whistler Backroads
- Captain Holidays Kayak and Adventure School

## 13.2 Desired Future

*The comments below represent feedback from the community and are included for relevancy and transparency; they do not necessarily represent a municipal, partner or stakeholder commitment or intent.*

Whistler's inventory of stunning rivers adds to the community's appeal to both residents and visitors from around the world.

The River of Golden Dream remains a popular canoeing and kayaking route for the resort community. The route is peaceful and free of litter and rowdiness thanks to careful planning and increased public awareness. This included upgrades to the take-out, as well as improved communication of river etiquette and responsible use around inflatable boats. Access routes along the river have also contributed to the longstanding popularity of the route.

A Regional Independent Power Projects master plan is developed for potential projects, which are integrated with recreational and resort values, be they river, land-based or views. Whistler has confidence that its whitewater opportunities are protected for the long term.

## 13.3 Recommended Directions

*The Recommended Directions below are a result of community engagement feedback and are not a commitment to invest. These directions will help inform decisions that are made by Council as part of the defined budget process and over the course of their ongoing deliberations.*

### 13.3.1 Improve experiences

**13.3.1.1** *Direction: Continue to work with Recreation Sites and Trails BC, the Cheakamus Community Forest Society and other relevant agencies to maintain or improve Forest Service Roads necessary for public access to valued assets.*

**Rationale:** Forest Service Roads (FSR) are often a means to quickly access sought after recreation assets. Deteriorated FSR's undermine the user experience and make assets less accessible. Of particular concern to the whitewater community are Westside Main (Black Tusk Forest Service Road) in the Whistler Interpretative Forest and Callaghan Creek Forest Service Road. This aligns with opportunities identified by the Off Road Trails Focus Group convened for the RLMP process.

### 13.3.2 Plan for new opportunities in response to resort needs and economic activities

**13.3.1.2** *Direction: Create a phased plan to address River of Golden Dreams opportunities and issues.*

**Rationale:** The River of Golden Dreams is a signature resort asset appealing to family-friendly canoeing and kayaking. The meandering 5 kilometre route is one of Whistler's highlights and the municipality would like to encourage users to stay safe and keep the river clean. Recently there have been numerous complaints from the public and tour operators regarding drinking and littering along the river. The plan could include upgrades to the take-out, communication of river etiquette and responsible use of inflatable boats, as well as improve to address low water conditions.

13.3.1.3 Direction: Undertake initiatives to protect and highlight Whistler's whitewater opportunities.

**RECOMMENDED ACTIONS:**

- A.** *Work with stakeholders and senior levels of government to develop a comprehensive regional Independent Power Project master plan that is integrated with resort values and objectives.*

**Rationale:** Independent Power Project (IPP) claims have been staked on area creeks and rivers, and a comprehensive plan integrated with resort recreational values would be helpful in planning development. According to an IPP proponent and the kayak community, an IPP on the lower Callaghan Creek, which lies within municipal boundaries, would eliminate internationally recognized whitewater opportunities.

- B.** *Explore feasibility of a constructed whitewater play and slalom course in Fitzsimmons Creek adjacent to Rebagliati Park.*

**Rationale:** Constructed whitewater play and slalom courses are the norm in many parts of the world, and are a missing component in Whistler's whitewater offerings. Provision of one in Fitzsimmons Creek would offer extremely convenient access and with additional benefits of increased awareness and Village animation similar to that offered by the nearby bike skills, jump and skateboard parks.





## 14 Fishing

### 14.1 Current Reality

There are lakes and rivers in Whistler that offer excellent recreational fishing opportunities for all levels of experience from beginner anglers to seasoned pros. From floating a tube in a scenic alpine lake to walking to a pristine glacial-fed river, fishing is an activity that can be enjoyed year round by everyone. Fishing is one of the fastest growing family activities in British Columbia.

Rainbow trout is the most common angling fish in the valley. In 1940, kokanee salmon were seeded in Alta Lake resulting in the establishment of a small and elusive population that can be found between Alta Lake and Green Lake. In recent years, the province has also stocked sterilized cutthroat trout to augment the fish population and reduce pressure on the resident fish. Cougar Lake has good fishing, due in part to original stocking initiatives that resulted in the establishment of a stable population.

Fairhurst Dock at Alta Lake South is a dedicated fishing dock, which received partner funding for its construction. One of the best fishing locations in Alta Lake is at Lakeside Park, because of the easy access and depth of the water.

The municipal-led Whistler Fisheries Stewardship Group has been less active recently than in the past, and it deals mainly with water quality and fish spawning. Overall there are ample foreshore areas for fishing with reasonable access.

The Whistler Angling Club started in response to threats to the local fishing experience. The club folded in 2008, as most issues had been addressed through Whistler Fisheries Stewardship Group.

Fishing Focus Group (July 9, 2013):

- Former member of Whistler Angling Club
- RMOW Environmental Stewardship
- RMOW Parks Planning

Invited to Focus Group but unable to attend:

- Whistler Fly-fishing
- Whistler Fishing Guides
- Whistler Backroads
- Senior Fish Biologist responsible for Whistler area, Ministry of Forest Lands and Natural Resource Operations

## 14.2 Desired Future

*The comments below represent feedback from the community and are included for relevancy and transparency; they do not necessarily represent a municipal, partner or stakeholder commitment or intent.*

Whistler's water resources provide a dependable supply of healthy water to meet the long-term needs of residents, other species, and nature. Whistler's healthy streams, lakes and wetlands support thriving populations of fish and wildlife.

The Whistler Fisheries Stewardship Group continues to deal with water quality and fish spawning monitoring, ensuring ample areas for fishing with reasonable access. Limited habitat destruction around residential development ensures a healthy fish population. Improved access to local lakes enhances the visitor experience and improved awareness of fishing opportunities within municipal boundaries.

## 14.3 Recommended Directions

*The Recommended Directions below are a result of community engagement feedback and are not a commitment to invest. These directions will help inform decisions that are made by Council as part of the defined budget process and over the course of their ongoing deliberations.*

### 14.3.1 Improve experiences

#### 14.3.1.1 **Direction:** Continue to improve and enhance lake fishing access within municipal boundaries.

**Rationale:** According to feedback, access for personal belly boats is limited by the availability of nearby parking and steps into the water. The exception is Nita Lake, which has good access. Access to Green Lake is limited to two points: Dream River Park and the Nicklaus North float plane dock. Users have indicated that some fishing locations could be modestly improved to enhance the experience.

#### 14.3.1.2 **Direction:** Work with the Ministry of Environment to protect and maintain nearby fishing.

**Rationale:** According to feedback, Cougar Lake is a significant fishing destination because it offers an alpine fishing experience with a self-sustaining fish population. The Ministry of Environment stocks Alpha, Loggers, Lost, Nita, and Alta Lake every year with sterile fish. Rainbow Lake is not stocked. The municipality has very little opportunity for input, and stocking is dependent on the provincial budget.

#### 14.3.1.3 **Direction:** Communicate fisheries regulations.

**Rationale:** Fisheries regulations are not well known, particularly with visitors. Communication of regulations would assist in conservation efforts.

### 14.3.2 Plan for new opportunities in response to resort needs and economic activities

#### 14.3.2.1 **Direction:** Explore ways to ensure fishing habitat is protected within municipal boundaries.

**Rationale:** According to feedback, the most important action the municipality can take to support fishing is to stand ground on habitat destruction around lakes and rivers, particularly with lakeshore residential development. The RMOW is subject to the provincial Riparian Areas Regulation, and has an opportunity to ensure language regarding habitat protection is included in the RLMP, Development Permit Areas, and the Environmental Bylaw.

### 14.3.3 Support the Whistler brand

#### 14.3.3.1 **Direction:** Increase exposure and promotion of fishing spots through marketing and collaboration with resort partners.

**Rationale:** Based on feedback from various stakeholder groups, Whistler fishing is an attraction with potential to bring more overnight visitors to the resort through exposure and promotion.





# WHISTLER RECREATION FACILITIES & PROGRAMS





## 15 Recreation Facilities

### 15.1 Current Reality

Whistler has a variety of indoor recreation facilities including an ice arena, aquatic centre, fitness centre, fitness studio, several gymnasiums, youth centre, a variety of meeting rooms, and squash courts. Beyond facilities owned and operated by the RMOW, there are many other recreation clubs and facilities. Joint use agreements are in place between the RMOW and School District #48 (Howe Sound) for community use of Myrtle Philip Community School, Spring Creek Community School, and Whistler Community Secondary School. Whistler Sport Legacies maintains a usage agreement with the Oros Gymnastics Club and Canadian Sport Centre Pacific for use of the High Performance Centre at the Whistler Athletes' Centre.

Throughout the year, Whistler's indoor recreation facilities attract residents and visitors. Whistler's Meadow Park Sports Centre (MPSC) hosts the majority of public indoor recreation. Facilities for both residents and visitors include: a six-lane pool, kid's pool, sauna, steam room, hot tub, a National Hockey League-sized arena, squash courts, weight room, cardio room, fitness studio and meeting room. Casual community drop-in use of facilities such as MPSC is popular along with programming at the various community centre gymnasiums.

Whistler's community centres are used for preschool programs, summer camps, after-school care, Girl Guides, crafts, dance, indoor team sports, and more. Many of Whistler's facilities also include special event areas that can be booked for private or community functions. Other facilities, such as the Spruce Grove Field House and Spring Creek Community School have formal lease agreements with local educational organizations including the Whistler Waldorf School and École La Passerelle.

During the winter, the RMOW transforms Whistler Olympic Plaza's great lawn and pavilion into a skating rink. With room for only 150 skaters at a time, skating at Olympic Plaza is as intimate as it is spectacular.

Recreation Facilities Focus Group (March 18, 2013):

- Whistler Skating Club
- Whistler Minor Hockey
- Whistler Men's recreation Hockey League
- Whistler All Start Hockey
- Whistler Old-timers
- RMOW Recreation

## 15.2 Desired Future

*The comments below represent feedback from the community and are included for relevancy and transparency; they do not necessarily represent a municipal, partner or stakeholder commitment or intent.*

Whistler has a variety of high quality indoor recreation facilities operated by the RMOW. Recreation facilities are reviewed on an ongoing basis to ensure they remain sufficient in scale and relevant to the resort community.

Residents and visitors continue to be very satisfied with the resort community's variety and accessibility of indoor recreation facilities. The diversity of recreation facilities is also delivered through the combined efforts of private enterprises, local government, community members, and dedicated not-for-profit groups. Joint use agreements between the RMOW and School District #48 continue to allow for community use of Myrtle Philip Community School, Spring Creek Community School, and Whistler Community Secondary School.

Meadow Parks Sports Centre (MPSC) continues to serve as a hub for public indoor recreation and provides facilities for fitness, aquatics, skating and squash for both residents and visitors. Ongoing improvements at MPSC elevate the user experience and keep the facility relevant. Other long-term enhancements are expected and being strategically planned for.

Many facilities also serve as special event areas, and booking for private or community functions is streamlined and easy to use. During the winter, Whistler Olympic Plaza skating rink continues to be a popular destination for residents and visitors.

The operation of recreational facilities and services is supported by tax dollars, but changes to fees and charges have helped address gaps caused by subsidizing non-resident use of the facilities.

## 15.3 Recommended Directions

*The Recommended Directions below are a result of community engagement feedback and are not a commitment to invest. These directions will help inform decisions that are made by Council as part of the defined budget process and over the course of their ongoing deliberations.*

### 15.3.1 Maintain and monitor service and satisfaction levels

#### 15.3.1.1 Direction: Continue to provide efficient delivery of municipal services to maintain high levels of satisfaction.

##### RECOMMENDED ACTIONS:

#### A. Continue to annually assess recreation facilities to ensure timely maintenance, improvements and planning.

**Rationale:** Recreation facilities are getting older and require maintenance and improvements. A long-term plan with budget allocations is necessary to address issues related to maintenance and wear. Integrated public and community facilities are key to ongoing success.

### 15.3.2 Improve experiences

##### RECOMMENDED ACTIONS:

#### A. Explore opportunities with School District #48 to increase community use of school recreation facilities.

**Rationale:** Currently the school district has priority use of related indoor recreation facilities. According to stakeholders, there is a desire to see more access granted to community groups during months while school is in session.

#### B. Explore ways to improve youth centre programs and facilities.

**Rationale:** The current youth centre requires renovation to improve to overall functionality of the space and make it suitable for other uses (i.e. LUNA Lounge, private rentals and overflow Whistler Arts Council programs). Staff have identified opportunities to improve youth programming to increase youth participation offered through the youth centre.

15.3.3 Plan for new opportunities in response to resort needs and economic activities

15.3.3.1 **Direction:** Ensure that facility space is being used and offered to its optimum potential.

**Rationale:** According to stakeholder feedback, space could be used more effectively and efficiently.

#### RECOMMENDED ACTIONS:

**A. Investigate further opportunities to attract and support tournaments.**

**Rationale:** According to feedback, Whistler's tournament potential remains untapped. Several user groups have expressed a desire to attract and increase tournaments. The RMOW has an opportunity to consider ways to attract more events and tournaments to the resort.

**B. Consider long-term Meadow Park Sports Centre enhancements.**

**Rationale:** According to stakeholders, desired MPSC improvements include updated and expanded change rooms, an expanded cardio area, arena viewing opportunities, and additional children's program space. Adding more squash courts and multi-purpose meeting rooms has also been discussed. Through this planning process, stakeholders have indicated a desire for enhanced food and beverage opportunities. Staff have identified a short term need to convert the arena meeting room into a universal change room while simultaneously providing an expanded multi-purpose meeting room suitable for a wider array of programs and providing a space that is more suitable and attractive for private rentals. Staff have identified public safety concerns when customers are approaching the entrance to the facility from the parking lot and believe adding a sidewalk or valet trail extension along the front of the building would mitigate parking lot safety issues while creating improved access to the front of the facility. The MPSC Feasibility Study report conducted in 2014 assesses possible enhancements for the longer-term use and growth in demand at the facility.

**C. Consider options for upgrading the pool at Meadow Park Sports Centre.**

**Rationale:** According to feedback, pool improvements are needed to address accessibility issues, expansion, and related support amenities. The MPSC pool is aging and improvements and upgrades will need to be considered. Moisture and chemicals, which are required for the operation of public pools, accelerate structural and mechanical wear and tear. Such structures typically have a 35-year functional lifespan. A Feasibility Study for MPSC conducted in 2014 has addressed some of the concerns related to possible upgrades.

**D. Consider ways to expand Meadow Park Sports Centre food service.**

**Rationale:** User groups would like to see an expansion of the MPSC concession. Ideas that have been discussed include creating a restaurant area, liquor primary establishment, and a sport nutrition centre.

**E. Continue to collaborate with facility partners for optimum use of shared RMOW recreation space.**

**Rationale:** Community Schools and the Youth Centre require open communication with partners in those facilities to ensure that community needs and organizational mandates are being met and space use can be maximized.

15.3.3.2 **Direction:** Conduct feasibility and needs assessment of current RMOW recreation facilities.

#### RECOMMENDED ACTIONS:

**A. Consider an indoor multi-sport facility feasibility and needs assessment.**

**Rationale:** A variety of stakeholder groups feel that the RMOW should consider constructing a new multi-use facility for sports such as tennis, roller derby, soccer, track and fitness.

A needs assessment and feasibility study would be a fact finding exercise looking at current best practices with similar facilities across North America, as well as conducting a high-level review of potential operating partnerships and models. This would include a review and report on the needs, projected usage, preferred locations, and types of uses (sports/non sport). The review would also include order of magnitude cost estimates and identification of typical capital funding, operating and partnerships models in place for similar type facilities.

**B. Explore the feasibility of adding a second sheet of ice at the Meadow Park Sports Centre arena.**

**Rationale:** According to engagement feedback, arena users would like to see the construction of a second sheet of ice. These groups feel it would allow user levels to grow and increase ice-time selection. The RMOW has an opportunity to explore the feasibility of a second sheet of ice through a fiscal reality and needs assessment.



- C.** *Work with local squash organization to determine if expansion is required. Assess expansion opportunities for the Meadow Park Sports Centre squash courts.*
- Rationale:** The Squash Club has stated that it does not have sufficient space to expand programs and tournaments. Stakeholders would like to see the RMOW consider constructing additional squash courts to enable larger tournaments and camps.
- D.** *Conduct ongoing assessment and status for all jointly operated facilities, including possible assessments on facility lifespan.*
- Rationale:** Facilities that are jointly used and operated by other organizations need continual attention to maintenance and structural needs to ensure that they are current. The RMOW needs to ensure that these assets are being properly maintained and continue to meet the RMOW standard for service.
- 15.3.4 Enhance administration, internal documents and processes
- 15.3.4.1 *Direction: Consider developing an online booking and cancellation procedure to highlight program space availability and manage bookings.*
- Rationale:** Feedback from community groups indicates that current booking and cancellations procedures for facilities and fields are cumbersome and unable to respond to some needs and last-minute cancellations efficiently.



## 16 Recreation Programs

### 16.1 Current Reality

Whistler's recreation and leisure programs are diverse and are delivered through the combined efforts of local government, community members, dedicated non-profit groups, and private enterprises. As a mountain resort community that attracts 2.7 million visitors annually, Whistler continues to make significant investment in leisure programming and services not found in most other similar sized communities.

The RMOW employs a mixed program model consisting of directly delivered programs and partnerships with community recreation providers. The RMOW plays an important role in providing affordable recreation and leisure opportunities for residents such as 50 percent off admission on Tuesday and Friday nights at MPSC, discounted midday and midweek admission and passes, "added value" group fitness classes, and free youth and young adult drop-in programming in the youth centre.

Overall, there is a wide range of recreation and leisure programs offered at RMOW facilities, as well as through community organizations, clubs and the private sector. The RMOW manages Meadow Park Sports Centre (MPSC), three community school facilities, one field house, the Lost Lake PassivHaus, and a youth centre (located in Millennium Place). The RMOW offers a robust seasonal program selection highlighted in a biannual guide that outlines indoor and outdoor programming for all ages, interests and abilities.

The operation of recreation and leisure programs is highly supported by tax dollars in most communities and the RMOW is under strain with increasing operating and service costs. Despite cost savings realized from a recent service review and from energy retrofits, the gap between revenue and operating costs is an ongoing challenge. Whistler also has exceptionally active residents and visitors, which puts added stress on RMOW programming and requires a level of service beyond normal levels to meet demand.

According to the most recent surveys, Whistler residents and visitors are satisfied with the resort community's recreation and leisure program offerings. The 2014 Community Life Survey indicated that 98 percent of all permanent residents are satisfied with current opportunities available for recreational activities.

The 2013 Meadow Park Sports Centre survey indicated that the overall value of the products and services offered at the sports centre meets expectations of 86 percent of residents surveyed. For 70 percent of respondents the sports centre met expectations and for 16 percent of respondents the sports centre exceeded expectations.

Recreation Facilities Focus Group (April 25, 2013):

- Whistler Roller Girls Society
- Whistler Taekwondo
- Whistler Youth Soccer Association
- Moving Mountains for Children Society
- Whistler Squash Club
- Quattro Aquatic Fitness
- Whistler Scouts
- Recreation and Leisure Advisory Committee (3 members)
- RMOW Recreation

Invited to Focus Group but unable to attend:

- Whistler Gymnastics Club

## 16.2 Desired Future

*The comments below represent feedback from the community and are included for relevancy and transparency; they do not necessarily represent a municipal, partner or stakeholder commitment or intent.*

The RMOW continues to offer a wide range of indoor and outdoor activities for all interests, ages and abilities. From preschool programming to yoga, swimming, skating, squash, cross-country skiing and hockey, there is something for everyone. Third party and municipal run programs ensure residents and visitors have access to year-round recreational opportunities. Many recreation and leisure programs continue to be delivered through the combined efforts of local government, community members, dedicated not-for-profit groups and private enterprises.

MPSC continues to be a hub for indoor sport programming and RMOW staff annually assesses new program opportunities, trends and population growth patterns. Many of these programs are suited to MPSC and community desires. The resort community is aware of MPSC programming through adjustments to the program delivery model. Programs continue to appeal to a number of user groups, the majority of which are residents of the Sea to Sky Corridor.

RMOW programs continue to be supported by tax dollars, and a user-fee structure is in place to offset costs. As population and demographics in the community shift and grow, the RMOW supports and fosters new recreation and leisure groups, supplementing the programs and services offered by the municipality.

## 16.3 Recommended Directions

*The Recommended Directions below are a result of community engagement feedback and are not a commitment to invest. These directions will help inform decisions that are made by Council as part of the defined budget process and over the course of their ongoing deliberations.*

16.3.1 Maintain and monitor service and satisfaction levels

16.3.1.1 **Direction:** Continue to provide a high level of programming opportunities to meet the diverse needs of the resort community.

### RECOMMENDED ACTIONS:

**A. Continuously evaluate and enhance existing municipal programming at all facilities.**

**Rationale:** Potentially collaborate with other municipal services, initiatives and facilities to enhance programming and participation. Seek to understand barriers that may affect participation and what adaptations could be made to improve and increase participation.

**B. Consider programming various appropriate activities in the Meadow Park Sports Centre squash courts.**

**Rationale:** There is potential to increase programming in the squash courts by allowing activities such as toddler school programs, kids soccer and yoga classes to use the courts.



16.3.1.2 Direction: Continue to collaborate with businesses and organizations for the development of recreation and to maintain a healthy community.

**RECOMMENDED ACTIONS:**

- A. *Continue to support and supplement the activities of local charities and organizations involved in the development of recreation programming.*

**Rationale:** Many recreation and leisure programs are delivered through the combined efforts of local government, community members, dedicated non-profit groups, and private enterprises. The RMOW employs a mixed program model consisting of directly delivered programs and partnerships with community recreation providers. Third-party organizations such as Moving Mountains have asked for more support through grants and use/rental of facilities such as daytime access to gym space. The Whistler Roller Girls are also looking for support in terms of space to practice and hold events.

16.3.2 Plan for new opportunities in response to resort needs and economic activities  
16.3.2.1 Direction: Continue to be industry leaders in the field of recreation by constantly evaluating trends and new program delivery models.

**RECOMMENDED ACTIONS:**

- A. *Monitor birth rates and census data to determine future program needs or opportunities.*

**Rationale:** According to stakeholders, there is a need to plan for an increased number of children and the corresponding need for childhood education opportunities, staff training, and toddler oriented cultural activity opportunities. Whistler's population is also aging, so there is a need to plan for the interests of current senior citizens and future needs in the community.

- B. *Continue to discuss with senior levels of government childhood education opportunities.*

**Rationale:** Recognizing that childhood education is generally the responsibility of provincial and federal governments, the municipality needs to be aware of changing needs for families with children requiring care outside of the general school system (E.g. New preschool opportunities and private school initiatives).

- C. *Consider adjusting delivery model at Meadow Park Sports Centre for certain programs.*

**Rationale:** To increase awareness of MPSC offerings there has been discussion around making adjustments to the program delivery model. This could include initiatives such as offering a class-only pass, a free access day and more.

- D. *Continue to monitor recreation and leisure trends to determine new program offerings.*

**Rationale:** There is a desire to add programs other than fitness, art, music and adult programming. This may involve looking at trends suited to MPSC such as certification programming or Phase 1 cardiac rehab programs.

- E. *Incorporate physical literacy knowledge and program identification into applicable recreation programs in accordance with the Canadian Sport 4 Life Long term athlete development model.*

**Rationale:** By increasing community awareness around what physical literacy actually means the RMOW can increase community wellness and health and aim to decrease long-term impacts on the health care industry.

16.3.3 Enhance administration, internal documents and processes  
16.3.3.1 Direction: Acquire a better registration and booking software that is user-friendly for both staff and patrons.

**RECOMMENDED ACTIONS:**

- A. *Monitor online registration processes to determine community use.*

**Rationale:** Feedback from community members indicates that current program booking and cancellations procedures for facilities and fields are cumbersome and unable to respond to some needs.

- B. *Increase customer service and communication around registration for programs.*

**Rationale:** An updated software system will include the ability to inform participants of their upcoming program or any changes to their program in a more timely fashion. This can increase staff's ability to provide more specific with participants and provide better service and communication.



# OTHER RECREATION AND LEISURE CONSIDERATIONS





## 17 Road Cycling

### 17.1 Current Reality

Renowned for mountain biking, Whistler also boasts significant opportunities for road cycling enthusiasts. Since 4,000 people caught the GranFondo fever in its inaugural 2010 ride, Whistler has become a road cycling destination. Participation in road cycling is increasing, and stakeholders suggest that it will continue to do so over the next 10 years. A new Whistler Cycling Club has a growing membership of over 70 riders. Road cycling events tend to draw high-end visitors to the resort. Road cycling and the vast majority of destination road cycling occur on Highway 99, which is the responsibility of the BC Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure (MOTI).

For all involved in cycling, the number one issue is safety. To this end municipalities in the Sea to Sky corridor are actively working with MOTI to improve maintenance, signage and infrastructure along Highway 99, as well as secondary roads in the Callaghan, Squamish/Paradise Valley and Pemberton. The Sea to Sky Road Cycling Collaborative, a group of representatives from across municipalities, is working to build the Sea to Sky corridor's reputation as a premier destination for road cycling, offering routes and amenities for all levels. The collaborative produced a safety and promotion brochure and will continue to advocate the corridor as a cycling destination. Conflicts between motorists and cyclists exist all over British Columbia, but Whistler has an opportunity to lead positive changes with a focus on a bike first, rather than vehicle first culture.

Currently cyclists use technology to access information about distances and elevation; however signs and road markings would enhance the riding experience and further communicate Whistler's reputation as a bike destination.



Road Cycling Focus Group (June 12, 2013):

- Team Whistler (2 members)
- Seeds Communications Consultant - “Share the Road” brochure and cycling ‘member at large’
- Recreation and Leisure Advisory Committee (2 members)
- RMOW Infrastructure Services
- RMOW Parks Planning

Invited to Focus Group but unable to attend:

- BC Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure
- Miller Capilano Maintenance Corporation
- Whistler Tri Club
- Whistler Village Sports

## 17.2 Desired Future

*The comments below represent feedback from the community and are included for relevancy and transparency; they do not necessarily represent a municipal, partner or stakeholder commitment or intent.*

Whistler is recognized for road cycling and has become a popular road cycling destination thanks to ongoing high profile events such as the annual GranFondo ride and IRONMAN Canada triathlon.

The road cycling experience in and near Whistler has improved due to increased signage, road maintenance and infrastructure along Highway 99, as well as secondary roads in the Callaghan, Squamish/Paradise Valley and Pemberton, and Alta Lake Road. The Sea to Sky Road Cycling Collaborative is the lead forum for regional road cycling advocacy and continues to work closely with the BC Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure (MOTI) to deal with safety issues and improve the road cycling experience.

The collaborative has helped build the Sea to Sky Corridor’s reputation as a genuine road cycling destination. Within the municipality, a high level of road maintenance and additional signage and pavement markings has contributed to the sport’s popularity along with ongoing awareness and promotion of all aspects of road riding.

## 17.3 Recommended Directions

*The Recommended Directions below are a result of community engagement feedback and are not a commitment to invest. These directions will help inform decisions that are made by Council as part of the defined budget process and over the course of their ongoing deliberations.*

17.3.1 Maintain and monitor service and satisfaction levels

17.3.1.1 **Direction:** Continue to maintain municipal roads to retain user satisfaction levels.

**Rationale:** Road cyclist satisfaction levels on municipally controlled roads are high. Maintaining these levels is important to overall road riding experience.

17.3.2 Improve experiences

17.3.2.1 **Direction:** Continue municipal leadership in the Sea to Sky Cycling Collaborative or equivalent.

**Rationale:** The Sea to Sky Road Cycling Collaborative is a group of representatives from across municipalities and stakeholders, and is working together to build the Sea to Sky corridor’s reputation as a premier destination for road cycling.

17.3.2.2 **Direction:** Continue to work closely with Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure to improve the road cycling experience on Highway 99 and the Callaghan Valley Road.

**Rationale:** The Sea to Sky Road Cycling Collaborative is a regional initiative, and there are Whistler specific issues that require more direct discussion with the MOTI.

17.3.3 Plan for new opportunities in response to resort needs and economic activities

17.3.3.1 **Direction:** Continually enhance the road cycling experience on municipally maintained roads.

**Rationale:** According to feedback, the RMOW has an opportunity to develop strategies that result in an improved road riding experience.

**RECOMMENDED ACTIONS:**

- A.** *Investigate the feasibility of road bike signage and pavement markings on municipal controlled roads.*  
**Rationale:** Users groups have said that road cyclist signage and pavement markings could be improved on municipal roads resulting in increased safety and enhanced user experience. Suggestions include but are not limited to additional “share the road” signs and elevation markings.
- 17.3.4 Support the Whistler brand  
 17.3.4.1 *Direction: Consider ways to increase the profile of all aspects of road riding.*  
**Rationale:** According to road cyclist stakeholders, Whistler needs to move toward a bike first culture like Europe. This may involve increasing education, awareness, and the promotion of all aspects of road riding including ancillary needs.
- 17.3.5 Enhance administration, internal documents and processes  
 17.3.5.1 *Direction: Consider restoring the Whistler Cycling Committee as a forum to discuss Whistler specific municipal and Highway 99 and the Callaghan Valley Road. road cycling issues.*  
**Rationale:** The Whistler Cycling Committee was established over 10 years ago with a broad mandate to address all cycling issues, on or off-road. The committee has been in hiatus for some time. Given that the Trails Planning Working Group is now addressing all off-road trail issues, the Whistler Cycling Committee could be re-established as the forum to discuss local road cycling issues and then feed into the regional Sea to Sky Cycling Collaborative.



## 18 BMX

### 18.1 Current Reality

In 2011 the Whistler BMX Club (WBMXC) was created in response to the growing demand for a local club. With clubs and tracks in neighbouring Squamish and Pemberton, BMX racing recognized as an Olympic sport, and Whistler's high level of mountain bike opportunities, the WBMXC is a natural fit. The WBMXC is a non-profit society created with intent to build a local track and fill a gap in bike activity offerings.

Cycling Canada and other related organizations report that BMX – hugely popular in the 1970's and '80s – is one of the fastest growing cycling sports in the country. New clubs and tracks are popping up at the local level.

While Whistler has numerous official and unofficial pump tracks and an official jump park, a BMX track does not exist. WBMXC aims to fundraise, build a track, and continue to grow and host events. With a potential for a desired national level build-out footprint close to that of a soccer field, the number of potential suitable sites in the Whistler area is limited due to terrain, size requirements, and land ownership.

BMX Focus Group (May 23, 2013):

- Whistler BMX Club
- RMOW Parks Operations
- RMOW Parks Planning

### 18.2 Desired Future

*The comments below represent feedback from the community and are included for relevancy and transparency; they do not necessarily represent a municipal, partner or stakeholder commitment or intent.*

The Whistler BMX Club is a thriving organization that supports local BMX events and programs. The club has access to numerous official and unofficial pump tracks, an official jump track, and helped with the establishment of a local track. The Whistler BMX Club manages the track, which is available to the public outside of club hours. The track periodically hosts events up to the sport's national level. The BMX track has encouraged the growth of the sport as well as attracted events.

### 18.3 Recommended Directions

*The Recommended Directions below are a result of community engagement feedback and are not a commitment to invest. These directions will help inform decisions that are made by Council as part of the defined budget process and over the course of their ongoing deliberations.*

18.3.1 Plan for new opportunities in response to resort needs and economic activities

18.3.1.1 [Direction: Allocate space for a BMX track.](#)

**Rationale:** There is an opportunity to foster BMX in Whistler with the creation of a BMX facility. Doing so would encourage the growth of the sport and events, and potentially have Olympic training synergies with Whistler Sport Legacies. A formal licensee agreement would be required to have the facility located on municipal lands. Suitable space is limited – the preferred location is Bayly Park.





## 19 Rock Climbing

### 19.1 Current Reality

Whistler's rock climbing routes and approach trails are located in a variety of jurisdictions. There are several rock climbing sites within municipal boundaries, including Nordic, Blueberry, Creekside and in the Cal Cheak area. Other areas such as Wedgewoods have potential, but no planned areas. Rock climbing in Nordic is a good early season area that is convenient: however access over private property is required and parking can be an issue.

Climbing also areas exist outside of municipal boundaries and in mountain areas including Whistler and Blackcomb. These include Cheakamus Canyon (Conroy FSR), the Rouges (old Salt Sheds), Brew Creek FSR (near Whistler RV Park and Campground), Suicide Bluffs (downstream from the Rutherford Whitewater Facility), and Green River Bastion (near the Highway 99/CN rail crossing south of Nairn Falls Provincial Park). The Cheakamus Canyon area is world-renowned, as it includes Canada's current hardest sport climb among its over 130 routes.

Several local commercial guiding businesses have tenures over specific areas, which permits public access. Commercial businesses maintain their own routes and also perform some maintenance work on other routes.

Volunteer climbers and groups provide maintenance and repair of routes and trails. Some climbing routes are in need of repair. Guidebooks contain bouldering and rope climbing information. The Access Society (Squamish) provides tools and minimal resources to help maintain and improve access to climbing sites.

Sport climbing is growing and in terms of popularity has become the new spin class in the United States. In Whistler, the Core Fitness Centre's biggest participation is indoor family/kids sport climbing. Climbing wall festivals and competitions are very popular in Europe, and would work well in Whistler especially at Whistler Olympic Plaza. Bouldering and rock climbing are not foreseen to grow significantly in the area because they are seen as a technical activity with associated risk.

Rock Climbing Focus Group (July 10, 2013):

- Whistler Core Fitness Centre
- RMOW Parks Planning

Invited to Focus Group but unable to attend:

- Whistler Alpine Guides Bureau

## 19.2 Desired Future

*The comments below represent feedback from the community and are included for relevancy and transparency; they do not necessarily represent a municipal, partner or stakeholder commitment or intent.*

Rock climbing continues to be a niche sport in Whistler. Area rock climbing routes are located on a variety of jurisdictions, but etiquette and respect have kept user conflicts to a minimum.

Several local commercial guiding businesses continue to thrive, taking clients to tenured areas, while volunteer climbers and groups provide maintenance of routes and trails. The Access Society helps ensure access to popular spots near Whistler and the sport continues to flourish.

## 19.3 Recommended Directions

*The Recommended Directions below are a result of community engagement feedback and are not a commitment to invest. These directions will help inform decisions that are made by Council as part of the defined budget process and over the course of their ongoing deliberations.*

19.3.1 Improve experiences

19.3.1.1 **Direction:** Work with the Access Society and other stakeholders to ensure access to rock climbing assets.

**Rationale:** Existing climbing opportunities in the Whistler region may lack legitimate access and there is a need to identify locations and explore opportunities to secure access.



## 20 Arts, Culture and Heritage

### 20.1 Current Reality

The areas of arts, culture, heritage, recreation and leisure are deeply connected. Arts, culture and heritage programming often occur in municipal parks and facilities. To enhance economic viability and growth, the community has invested in researching and identifying opportunities to build and develop place-based cultural tourism opportunities. The Whistler Community Cultural Plan was developed and adopted by Council as the RLMP's engagement process was underway.

Cultural Focus Group (June 27, 2013):

- Whistler Alliance for Cultural Tourism (ACT) which includes:
  - Whistler Arts Council
  - Whistler Chamber of Commerce
  - Whistler Museum and Archives Society
  - Whistler Public Library
  - Point Artist Run Centre
  - RMOW Events and Village Animation
  - Recreation and Leisure Advisory Committee (2 members)
  - RMOW Recreation
  - RMOW Parks Planning

Invited to Focus Group but unable to attend:

- ACT – Whistler Film Festival Society
- ACT – Squamish Lil'wat Cultural Centre (input gathered separately)
- ACT – KR Productions

### 20.2 Desired Future

*The comments below represent feedback from the community and are included for relevancy and transparency; they do not necessarily represent a municipal, partner or stakeholder commitment or intent.*

Whistler is renowned for its healthy and creative community, and its significant arts, cultural and heritage opportunities that have become a part of the Whistler brand and community life. Whistler is creative, authentic, diverse, sustainable, accessible, and affordable to both residents and visitors.



The areas of arts, culture, heritage, recreation and leisure are seamless and deeply connected. This is the core of Whistler's place-based cultural tourism strategy. Whistler has become widely recognized for its integrated policies and programs that encourage economic prosperity through recreation, leisure and cultural initiatives.

## 20.3 Recommended Directions

*The Recommended Directions below are a result of community engagement feedback and are not a commitment to invest. These directions will help inform decisions that are made by Council as part of the defined budget process and over the course of their ongoing deliberations.*

**NOTE:** In summer 2015, the municipality has launched the Cultural Connector Project to improve the physical, visual and experiential connectivity between the following six significant cultural institutions located in Whistler Village and the Upper Village. While this is an important project for Whistler's arts, culture and heritage assets, it has been excluded from the RLMP since Whistler Village has its own set of unique characteristics worthy of a separate planning process: Whistler Village 3.0. Information on this project is available on the municipal website at: [whistler.ca/village3.0](http://whistler.ca/village3.0).

### 20.3.1 Maintain and monitor service and satisfaction levels

#### 20.3.1.1 *Direction: Continue to work with partner agencies and stakeholders to optimize use of existing infrastructure.*

**Rationale:** The municipality owns several properties that are used for cultural and recreational purposes. A prime example is the former hostel site on Alta Lake Road (now operating with the Whistler Sailing Association and the Point Artist Run Centre Society). Working together will help to maximize objectives of both the Community Cultural Plan and the RLMP.

### 20.3.2 Plan for new opportunities in response to resort needs and economic activities

#### 20.3.2.1 *Direction: Identify synergies between the RLMP and the Community Cultural Plan.*

**Rationale:** There is significant overlap between the Community Cultural Plan and the RLMP. The two plans should not be merged, but synergies should be identified. There is an opportunity to acknowledge how interconnected parks and recreation are with culture, and how they reinforce place based tourism opportunities.

#### **RECOMMENDED ACTIONS:**

#### **A. *Organize regular meetings between stakeholders to identify and discuss opportunities.***

**Rationale:** While stakeholder organizations of the municipality and the Whistler Arts Council are closely linked, meeting regularly to focus on topics of mutual interest will generate efficiencies and be of benefit to the resort community. Other organizations should also participate in these meetings as required.

#### **B. *Continue to test and develop programs at the former Hostel Site that balance cultural initiatives with recreational uses.***

**Rationale:** The former hostel site on Alta Lake Road was acquired by the RMOW in 2008 and is currently used for a combination of recreational, cultural and residential uses. As a key municipal asset with challenging access issues, testing a variety of initiatives will inform long-term planning and potential investment.

### 20.3.2 Support the Whistler brand

#### **RECOMMENDED ACTIONS:**

#### **A. *Work with partner agencies to help complement and cross promote resort offerings.***

**Rationale:** Municipal recreational facilities provide arts and cultural programs, as do other agencies. Other municipal infrastructure provides interpretative and heritage information. A collaborative approach would leverage opportunities.

### 20.3.3 Enhance administration, internal documents and processes

#### **RECOMMENDED ACTIONS:**

#### **A. *Consider developing a heritage inventory to inform future planning decisions.***

**Rationale:** While the municipality itself is young, the region possesses considerable heritage, not all of which is well documented. Having this information would aid in planning and potentially adding a cultural layer to municipal initiatives.

