

To: CAO for the Regional and Corporate Services Committee

Date: 2019-07-09

From: Meghan Jackson, Parks Technician

File No: 6120-02-Regional Trail

Subject: FVRD's Trail Network Group

RECOMMENDATION

THAT the Fraser Valley Regional District Board expand the scope of its Trail Network Group to a regional scale to ensure representation from organizations involved in the maintenance and/or management of trails within the entire geographic area.

STRATEGIC AREA(S) OF FOCUS

Support Healthy & Sustainable Community
Support Environmental Stewardship
Foster a Strong & Diverse Economy

PRIORITIES

Priority #5 Outdoor Recreation
Priority #4 Tourism

BACKGROUND

In April 2015, the Fraser Valley Regional District (FVRD) Board directed staff to create and lead a local Trail Network Group in response to a growing demand for a forum to discuss the planning, creation, and maintenance of non-motorized trails specifically in the Chilliwack area. Since then, the FVRD has been hosting quarterly meetings that are attended by multiple organizations, including:

- City of Chilliwack
- BC Parks
- Recreation Sites and Trails BC
- Trails BC
- Chilliwack Outdoors Club
- Chilliwack Parks Society
- Fraser Valley Mountain Biker's Association
- Tourism Chilliwack
- Coastal Fire Service
- People of the River Referral's Office

These meetings are two hours in length with approximately 10-20 attendees per meeting (attendance is entirely voluntary). They typically start with a presentation on a topic of interest to the group, followed by round table project updates and discussions. Past presentations have included topics such as:

- Considering archaeology in project planning
- Aboriginal Youth Mountain Bike Program
- BC Wildfire Service

- Trail and traffic counters

DISCUSSION

These meetings have proven to be an effective venue for agencies to network, problem solve and collaborate regarding trail development and maintenance. Trail development is an involved process, which includes: route planning, First Nations referral, environmental assessment, formal approvals, signage planning and installation, and finally construction. Once a trail is built, ongoing maintenance is required, including: vegetation removal, erosion mitigation, danger tree assessment/removal, trail counters, and communication with user groups.

Interest in attending these meetings has increased, and there is now a growing need to expand the group's scope to include organizations from outside the Chilliwack area. FVRD trail counter statistics indicate an upward trend in the number of trail users, and the *Regional Parks Strategic Plan 2014-2024* expects that the "demand for outdoor recreation will continue to climb at a rate faster than population growth". Given this demand, it is not surprising that the interest in attending these meetings has increased. Some of the benefits of expanding this meeting's geographical scope would be greater potential for region-wide collaboration on trail projects, increased opportunity to network with and learn from other agencies doing similar work, and would allow the FVRD to be more aware of trails projects happening in the region.

There are several other organizations involved in trail development and maintenance outside of the Chilliwack Area, including the Parks and Trails departments in FVRD's member municipalities, which would be great additions to the group. Also, with the FVRD's expanded involvement in Sumas Mountain Regional Park, increased opportunities to collaborate with City of Abbotsford staff would be ideal. Other groups to invite to the table would include the Hope Mountain Centre for Outdoor Learning, New Pathways to Gold Society, and Cascade Lower Canyon Community Forest.

COST

There are no new costs associated with expanding the scope of participants in the Trail Network Group.

CONCLUSION

The FVRD's quarterly Trail Network Group has proven to be useful for, and popular amongst, organizations managing and/or maintaining non-motorized trails in the Chilliwack area. By expanding the scope of this group and inviting organizations that fit these criteria from within the Region, there are greater benefits to be realized. The inclusion of groups from the rest of the Fraser Valley would further encourage collaboration amongst agencies involved in trail development, promoting trail connectivity and supporting outdoor recreation and tourism in our Region.

COMMENTS BY:

Stacey Barker, Director of Regional Services:

Reviewed and supported.

Mike Veenbaas, Director of Financial Services:

Not available for comment.

Jennifer Kinneman, Acting Chief Administrative Officer:

Reviewed and supported.