

Collaborative planning for trails: Assessing the development of trail strategies in Canada and abroad

**A review prepared by MASS LBP for Trans Canada Trail/Sentier
Transcanadien and Parks Canada in advance of the National
Trail Leadership Roundtable.**

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Executive Summary

Over the past decade, government departments, not-for-profit and non-governmental organizations, as well as trail users, builders, and operators, have increasingly recognized the value of aligning their efforts and working side-by-side to develop a comprehensive vision for the trails sector. Collaborative approaches to trails promote common interests while working to resolve conflict amongst stakeholders.

In Canada, there are many collaborative efforts at the local, provincial, and national level. But rarely do the leaders of these efforts get a chance to talk to one another about working as a team. This is why Trans Canada Trail/Sentier Transcanadien (TCT) and Parks Canada are pioneering the National Trail Leadership Roundtable this fall. The Roundtable will provide trail stakeholders across the country with a forum for dialogue.

This paper, commissioned by TCT and Parks Canada, provides background information for the Roundtable. It reviews strategic planning initiatives in eleven jurisdictions to extract *procedural* considerations for collaboration. A second, forthcoming discussion paper will provide *substantive* considerations specific to the Canadian context.

Strategic planning initiatives represent successful efforts to increase coordination, promote the benefits of trails, secure more substantive funding and create stronger, more unified trail communities. Our research takes a particular interest in the methods used to identify conflict, align the goals and interests of different stakeholders, and promote a more joined-up, cohesive approach to trail planning and use. We are not concerned with the results or implementation of these initiatives, and we do not advocate the development of a national strategy for Canadian trails. Instead, we present five lessons for Roundtable participants, and others in the trails sector, to consider when discussing how to work together towards common goals.

Our five lessons are:

1. Collaboration and cooperation take time.
2. Solid research is a necessary foundation.
3. Good planning requires cohesive leadership.
4. Collaboration is the result of consultation.
5. Provisions for implementation and future decision-making add value and solidify commitment.

Introduction

Recreational trails around the world are recognized as important assets that support healthy living, tourism and provide myriad economic benefits. But as their popularity increases, the demand grows for trails that can accommodate many different uses— uses which may conflict. Horseback riders, mountain bikers, snowmobilers and drivers of all-terrain vehicles — all are legitimate and important trail users, but this doesn't mean that their compatibility with hikers, snowshoers or cross-country skiers comes easily. Funding to build and maintain trails is not always sustainable, and land management and environmental concerns present additional challenges. Resolving these issues to enhance trail networks requires collaboration and planning. Governments, user groups, and other trail stakeholders in Canada and abroad are taking notice and embarking on collaborative planning efforts, in the form of Trail Strategies, to improve trails for the long-term.

Many Canadians value trails for supporting economic growth, inspiring the discovery of national history, encouraging active living, and contributing to green initiatives. Recent progress in strategic planning is encouraging. Several provinces have completed in-depth Trail Strategies, reviewed or updated trail-related legislation, or started planning processes. National organizations like Trans Canada Trail/Sentier Transcanadien and the National Trails Coalition (which brings together the Canadian Council of Snowmobile Organizations, the Canadian Off-Highway Vehicle Distributors Council, and the Canadian Trails Federation) have brought increased recognition to the value of trails throughout the country.

These initiatives are important catalysts in the movement towards trail stakeholder cooperation, but they are not enough. The need for sustainable funding, better ways to address and resolve conflict and more effective promotion of the benefits of trails have become apparent to many trail advocates. Too few opportunities for coordination among Canada's leading trail organizations harms their potential for advocacy, and the lack of a federal agency responsible for trails compounds the problem.

Without established mechanisms for dialogue, problem solving, research and collective decision-making, Canada's trail movement is held back. Trail advocates across the country have noted this gap. They have called for an effective process to draw together and better align the wide range of trail stakeholders in Canada.

National Trail Leadership Roundtable

Trans Canada Trail/Sentier Transcanadien and Parks Canada have taken an important step towards increasing collaboration among trail stakeholders. They have commissioned Canada's first National Trail Leadership Roundtable, planned for November 2010 in Banff, Alberta. More than 50 participants representing a diversity of trail builders, users, operators and government stakeholders will convene at the Roundtable. Over the course of two days, participants will attend a series of professionally facilitated large and small group conversations, designed to bridge important divides among user communities and align disparate interests. The Roundtable aims to build relationships among trail stakeholders, strengthen ties with government agencies at all levels, and develop a vision for cooperation among Canada's trail leaders.

Planning for the Roundtable is well underway. The Roundtable Planning Committee has been meeting regularly since June 2010 to ensure that the Roundtable process reflects the needs of trail builders and users. Members provide input to the organization of the Roundtable, and advise the Roundtable support staff provided by TCT and Parks Canada. The Planning Committee is comprised of ten trail leaders from across the country, representing:

- Trans Canada Trail/Sentier Transcanadien
- Parks Canada
- Canadian Council of Snowmobile Organizations
- Canadian Trails Federation
- International Mountain Bicycling Association Canada
- New Brunswick Trails Council
- Northwest Territories Parks and Recreation Association
- British Columbia Ministry of Tourism, Sport and the Arts
- Newfoundland Department of Tourism, Culture and Recreation
- Trans Canada Trail Ontario

The research component to Roundtable planning is also in progress. TCT and Parks Canada have commissioned two papers that will be circulated to participants in advance of the Roundtable. These papers will provide a sound starting point for Roundtable conversations. Given the diversity of participants, who may be well versed in the issues facing their community but less knowledgeable about trails in other parts of the country, a common base of information and a framework for discussion is necessary.

This is the first paper. It is a review of strategic trail planning documents, mostly in the form of Trail Strategies, from eleven Canadian provinces and international jurisdictions. This paper identifies the sound procedural features of strategic trail planning, to the extent this information can be found in the documents examined. It is not an exhaustive analysis of Trail Strategy

implementation and outcomes, in part because many strategies are new and this information is not available. This paper concentrates instead on strategy creation, finding the elements that helped drive initial collaboration among stakeholders. Distilling these elements provides important lessons that should influence the design of a made-in-Canada approach to enhancing national trails.

The second, forthcoming paper is a discussion paper based on interviews with members of the Roundtable Planning Committee. Initial conversations during the planning process revealed a multitude of common challenges facing Committee members, in areas such as user education and etiquette, trail promotion and marketing, quality assurance, liability and risk management, and quantitative research. The discussion paper will group these and other challenges identified through interviews, amplifying areas of common interest. It will focus on the Canadian trail movement. Roundtable participants should see some of their concerns reflected in the discussion paper, and will have the opportunity to add their perspective at the Roundtable. By providing initial insight to shared obstacles, the discussion paper will spur participants to think about opportunities for collaboration.

Methodology

Our initial scan of collaborative planning efforts across jurisdictions revealed that Trail Strategies were the method most often used to bring diverse stakeholders together towards common goals. This paper reviews Strategies in eleven jurisdictions. The Roundtable Planning Committee recommended these strategies as promising or thorough examples of collaboration. Each profile discusses who initiated the planning process and why, and what steps they took to develop a long-term strategy, how they gathered information, and whom they consulted, to the extent that this information is provided in the document. An analysis of the extent to which planning produced intended outcomes is beyond the scope of this study.

The second section sets out major findings from the review according to the following categories:

- The rationale for a collaborative plan
- The trail type(s) targeted
- The partners who initiate or lead the planning process
- The steps of the process
- The final plan

By sorting strategies into these categories, this section brings to light common attributes across jurisdictions. It examines the shared procedural features of promising trail planning efforts to extract lessons for leaders in Canada. The final section details these lessons and urges

Roundtable participants to consider them when creating a Canadian vision for trails and discussing a national approach to collaboration.

Profiles

Canada

British Columbia Recreational Trails Strategy

British Columbia (BC) trail enthusiasts have long expressed interest in a provincial trails strategy. Many efforts led by the Outdoor Recreation Council of British Columbia over the past 30 years attempted some form of strategic coordination, and more recently, recommendations on the need for collaboration have been made by the Recreation Stewardship Panel, the Union of BC Municipalities, the Off Road Vehicle Coalition, and several provincial government initiatives. In 2006, the Recreation Sites and Trails Branch of the BC Ministry of Tourism, Sport and the Arts, partnered with the Ministry of Environment - BC Parks to initiate the development of a Draft Recreational Trails Strategy for BC.

A six-person Recreational Trails Steering Committee, made up of representatives from the two leading agencies, initially led the development of the Draft Strategy. Their first step was to commission a research and consultation process that would result in a detailed background report on BC trails and the trail community. Several research methods were used to gather information, including a literature review of previous efforts in BC and other jurisdictions and internet-based research of relevant agencies and organizations. The development of a Recreational Trails Strategy Survey helped gather information from government agencies, First Nations, and non-government organizations with an interest in trails (although no representatives from water-based trail groups responded). This primary research built an empirical basis of information for subsequent analysis and recommendations, and established strong support (92%) for a provincial trails strategy.

The Background Report, published in 2007, included an overview of existing trail networks in BC, a review of existing legislation and policy, an assessment of current and future recreation trends and best practices related to the trail strategies of other jurisdictions. Using this research and the empirical evidence gathered through the survey, the Background Report provided a SWOT assessment of the trail network, key issues regarding trails, including the benefits of trails, criteria for prioritizing new trails, and links to other government initiatives. Some of the challenges identified were the lack of comprehensive vision for BC's recreational trails, the high operating and maintenance cost of trails, and issues related to liability management, marketing, and trail use designations. Some of the opportunities trail enhancement presents are encouraging healthy

lifestyles and bringing tourism benefits to communities that have been relying on the faltering forestry industry for economic development. These were the issues the Draft Strategy aimed to address.

The second step of the Draft Strategy development process involved establishing a Trails Strategy Advisory Committee to aid the Recreational Trails Steering Committee. The Advisory Committee included representatives from trail user and advocacy groups and First Nations. The Steering Committee was expanded to include a representative from the Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure. These Committees led an extensive stakeholder and community consultation process. These consultations helped develop a widely endorsed, shared vision for BC's trails, as well as guiding principles and key components of a sustainable trail program.

The Draft Strategy establishes "clear direction for planning, developing, acquiring, maintaining, managing, promoting and using trails" (Background Report p. 8). It provides action items for the issues surfaced through the research and consultation process, and suggests a management plan to support future decision-making. The draft underwent a comprehensive public review in the fall of 2008 and was revised by the Advisory and Steering Committees. While there is strong support for the strategy in the provincial government, an election in the spring of 2009 and the frequent change of ministers and deputy ministers has hampered the Strategy's final approval. Once approved, the last phases involve the development of an action plan for implementation and provisions for monitoring and revising the strategy. This strategic planning process increased collaboration among provincial representatives of core user groups and opened channels of dialogue that continue informally today. In addition, it created important communication between the provincial government and the core user groups.

Ontario Trails Strategy

The Ministry of Tourism and Recreation established an Inter-Ministerial Working Group on Trails in 2003. This Working Group began to shape the process for developing an Ontario Trails Strategy. Recognizing the importance of the many different stakeholders involved in developing, maintaining, and enjoying Ontario's trails, and hoping to increase collaboration and cooperation, the Working Group brought together a range of organizations in the winter of 2004 to act as a Minister's Advisory Committee. Members of this Advisory Committee represented trail groups, environmental and heritage organizations, property owners, the tourism industry, Aboriginal communities and municipalities.

The following year involved stakeholder workshops, designed to capture the expertise of stakeholders on trail-related topics such as the health benefits of trails, environmental impacts, tourism potential and landowner concerns. The information gathered through these workshops informed a series of fourteen regional community consultations, where community members provided feedback on each trail-related topic. The Working Group also solicited written briefs and e-mail comments from stakeholders and community members, posted feedback from all consultations on the Ministry's website, and conducted additional research from trail-related research documents. The Ministry of Health Promotion published the Strategy in 2005.

The Strategy begins with an overview of the importance of trails. It cites studies on physical activity and health and the economic impact of trails, and includes data on trail use collected by the Ontario Trails Council, Hike Ontario, and the Ontario Federation of Snowmobile Clubs, among other trail organizations. Next, it reviews trends affecting trails in Ontario and challenges facing the trails community identified by stakeholders and community members. Many of these challenges were shared by trail stakeholders province-wide: the high cost of liability insurance, the lack of coordination of trail groups, and inadequate trail access for off-road vehicles, for example. Other challenges were specific to certain locations, such as the challenges associated with distance, rugged topography and smaller volunteer pools in Northern Ontario. Stakeholders and community members also saw opportunities that could benefit from a provincial trail strategy, such as preserving Ontario's natural heritage and improving the health of the population.

The Strategy is designed to provide a coordinated approach to these challenges and opportunities. It sets out five strategic directions to focus stakeholders' efforts in enhancing Ontario's trails: improving collaboration, enhancing sustainability, enhancing the trail experience, educating the public, and fostering better health and a strong economy. These strategic directions, and the recommended actions that accompany them, are informed by the extensive consultation and research process undertaken by the Inter-Ministerial Working Group and Minister's Advisory Committee.

The final section of the Strategy acknowledges that enhancing Ontario's trails is a shared responsibility. It mentions local and regional trail clubs, municipalities, conservation authorities, businesses, private property owners, umbrella organizations, provincial trail user organizations, and the provincial government, specifically the Ministry of Health Promotion, as stakeholders responsible for ensuring the coordinated implementation of the Strategy's recommendations.

Currently, some funding is available to interest groups who put forth best practices to implement recommendations or solve one or more of the challenges identified in the Strategy. There are too few applications coming through this channel, however, and Ontario still lacks a forum to share best practices. Other factors also hamper the implementation of the strategy – employees at the Ministry are working on a number of portfolios at a time, money for trails is engulfed in a larger funding mechanism for community projects, and the recession has limited available funding for the near future. However, the Strategy process gave stakeholders the opportunity to recognize their common interests and work towards reconciliation and consolidation of efforts.

Pathway to Success: A Strategy for Trail Development in Saskatchewan

For a number of years, trail stakeholders across Saskatchewan guided efforts to develop a new provincial organization that would lead the Trans Canada Trail and other trail development across the province. In 2004, the Saskatchewan Parks and Recreation Association (SPRA) aided these efforts by facilitating the incorporation of the Saskatchewan Trails Association (STA). This new association had a mandate to promote the development and use of recreational trails throughout Saskatchewan. In 2007, the STA proposed the development of a provincial trails strategy after several discussions with the former provincial Department of Community, Youth and Recreation. The STA secured a Community Initiatives Fund grant in 2008, originally meant to fund a provincial trails symposium. The addition of a second grant under the SPRA's new Recreation Investment Partnership Program expanded the original symposium proposal into an extensive multi-stakeholder engagement process on the development of a provincial trails strategy. The Ministry of Tourism, Parks, Culture and Sport provided additional assistance.

A five-person Strategic Planning Committee was established to lead the strategy development process. The process began with a series of consultations with representatives from health, economic development, tourism, environmental organizations and user groups. These consultations determined challenges to and priorities for trail development, including issues of safety on multiple use trails, declining volunteer rates, lack of coordination among trail groups and lack of standardized trail protocol. Identified opportunities of trail enhancement include promoting healthy communities and healthy living, capitalizing upon the economic and tourism benefits of trails, increasing environmental stewardship and preserving cultural heritage.

The Strategy includes a review of the best practices from trails planning in other jurisdictions, and aims to “provide the mechanism for volunteer organizations, government agencies, and other stakeholders to work cooperatively and collaboratively towards common ends in a non-competitive manner” (p. 18). Based on the extensive research and consultation process, the

Strategy presents seven guiding principles for future planning and a set of recommendations for each guiding principle. Suggested leaders, stakeholders and timelines are given for the implementation of each action.

The draft strategy was presented to stakeholders for feedback at the 2008 Saskatchewan Trails Conference, and the final strategy was published in 2009.

Alberta Recreation Corridors Legislative Review

The Ministry of Community Development established the Alberta Recreation Corridors Legislative Review Committee, comprised of three Members of the Legislative Assembly, in 2000. Originally formed to review existing trail-related legislation, the Review Committee's three month term was extended to ensure "that appropriate consideration is given to the complex issues" (Appendix 1) surrounding Alberta's recreation corridors. The Review Committee compiled research on the needs, issues, and concerns of existing trails and future recreation corridors.

This research informed the Review Committee's Interim Report, released in early 2002. The Interim Report found that "there is a wide range of stakeholders involved with and impacted by recreation corridors" (p. 1). For this reason, the Review Committee, which was reconstituted after the 2001 provincial election with new members, recommended province-wide public consultation.

The public consultation process consisted of stakeholder workshops, written submissions and evening public meetings. At these sessions, the Review Committee presented a set of fifteen guiding principles that had been developed through previous research and stakeholder consultations. Participants helped revise these principles and discussed challenges the Final Report should address. These challenges included liability, safety and policing, maintenance, privacy and access, and environmental stewardship. Participants also discussed the opportunities provided by recreation corridors in Alberta, such as increasing the physical activity, health and wellness of Albertans and developing the economy through rural diversification and tourism promotion.

The Review Committee also hosted a cross ministry workshop for provincial government department representatives. Input from this workshop informed a recreation corridor issue workbook, which was distributed for public comment. Department representatives were later presented with potential recommendations developed by the Review Committee and asked for

feedback. In addition, the Review Committee contacted other provinces to learn about their trails planning processes and reviewed applicable legislation in Alberta and the Alberta Community Development Business Plan.

The Final Report was published in 2003 and lists fifteen guiding principles for recreation corridors and a set of nine recommendations on key challenges. It does not recommend new legislation for recreation corridors, but does recommend establishing a provincial Coordinating Committee to develop criteria, standards and policies for a Recreation Corridor Designation Program. It lists Alberta Community Development as a key government support for this process, and suggests that Alberta TrailNet, a charitable society representing major trail groups in the province, take responsibility for an ongoing review of corridors that achieve designation. For each recommendation, the Report suggests a direction for action and lists potential implications for consideration.

Since the Final Report, the Alberta Recreation Corridor and Trails Advisory Committee has reviewed and recommended the creation of a Recreation Corridor and Trails Designation Program. This initiative is currently before the government standing policy committee, with results not expected for several months. However, there is progress on a number of related projects, such as the Provincial Recreation Corridor and Trails Map Project, the Alberta Recreation Corridor and Trails Classification Guide, a trail operator's manual on Minimizing Risk and Liability and a Youth OHV Education and Safety Training Program.

Reinvesting in the New Brunswick Trail System: A Long-Term Management Strategy

Work on a provincial trail plan began in 2007 when the New Brunswick government recognized the importance of reinvesting in the provincial trail system in its policy document, *Charter for Change*. In 2008, the departments of Natural Resources, Public Safety, Tourism and Parks, and Transportation published a brief document on long-term management for the province's trails.

The Strategy notes that there is a number of government and non-government stakeholders involved in trail management, including the New Brunswick Trail Council, the New Brunswick Federation of Snowmobile Clubs and the New Brunswick All-Terrain Vehicle Federation. However, there is currently no coordinated approach to trail management. The Strategy hopes to address this gap by formulating a new vision for trails in New Brunswick.

Little information is provided on the Strategy's development process. The Strategy identifies that the new vision must ensure that trails are strategically located, safe, and sustainable. It addresses

operational issues related to infrastructure, enforcement and access, and provides actions for each issue. These actions are accompanied by expected completion dates.

The Department of Natural Resources is working with its partner departments to implement this strategy and develop a master trail plan.

Manitoba Recreational Trails Association Strategic Plan

The Manitoba Recreational Trails Association (MRTA) was formed in 1992 to “provide the support, knowledge, technology, and resources necessary to promote the construction and use of recreational trails throughout Manitoba thereby improving the economy, the environment and human well-being” (p. 6). With the help of provincial funding, the MRTA initiated planning efforts in 2007 and published a strategic plan in 2008. This plan focuses on the “philosophy, approach, and planned activities” (p.1) of the MRTA.

Specifically, the plan addresses the goal of completing construction of the Trans Canada Trail, but also aims to “assist local associations to maximize their trail’s potential” (p.1). It begins with a review of the status of the Trans Canada Trail in Manitoba, and details the general and geographic needs for trail development. The funding situation and estimated construction costs for a number of trails are given in detail.

A brainstorming session with the MRTA board identified barriers and constraints to trail development, as well as potential solutions. To help trail groups with their building projects, the MRTA suggests establishing a database of trail resources, including regional contact information for various government departments interested in trails. To raise capital for construction goals, the MRTA recommends establishing a fundraising committee. Likewise, a policy committee is recommended to examine organizational challenges. Additional suggestions include developing a volunteer recognition program to increase volunteerism, revising and expanding the MRTA Marketing Plan, and educating regional trail groups, the general public, and provincial government agencies on the benefits of trails.

The organization’s 2007 strategic plan is a foundation document that is reviewed and updated each year and presented to participants at the MRTA’s Annual General Meeting.

Ireland

Irish Trails Strategy

Interest in planning for trails in Ireland dates back to the 1970s, when the Sports Section of the Department of Education recognized walking as an accessible recreational sport. The Long-Distance Walking Routes Committee was established in 1979 and subsequently developed more than thirty walking routes. Trails now come under the responsibility of the National Waymarked Way Advisory Committee (NWWAC), a sub-committee of the Irish Sports Council (ISC). In 2006, NWWAC initiated the development of the Irish Trails Strategy, following the 2003-2005 Irish Sports Council's Statement of Strategy, *Sport for Life*.

The Strategy, under the direction of the Irish Trails Strategy Steering Committee, was prepared involving "a large network of statutory agencies, authorities, community groups and individuals throughout the country" (p. 6). It aimed to kick-start construction on trails, which had stalled over the past decade, and bring trail quality up to international standards. These goals were to be achieved through a coordinated strategic overview and integrated approach at the levels of decision-making, planning, and implementation.

The Strategy provides an overview of the state of Irish trails and reviews international trail development initiatives. It discusses the health, economic, environmental, cultural and social context of trails, relying on studies from other sectors, such as the Irish Task Force on Obesity, the Countryside Recreation Network in the United Kingdom, the Irish Tourism Action Plan, and an economic survey on the value of trails that was commissioned by the Irish Sports Council in 2005. The Irish Sports Council also completed research on trail users, capturing the changes in user demand over the past decade. This research, combined with consultation of government departments and trail stakeholders, identified the strengths and weaknesses of the national trail network.

The Strategy sets out guiding principles that include sustainable trail development, sustained user, landowner, community and agency involvement and support, integrated trail planning, and coordinated marketing and promotion. It identifies actions to achieve these principles, noting

that the success is “contingent upon the ability and effectiveness of all stakeholders to coordinate trail planning and development activities” (p. 42).

Integrated trail planning is recognized as a considerable challenge, given the minimal coordination and planning mechanisms currently in place. To overcome this challenge, the Strategy recommends the designation of a lead department and the establishment of an Irish Trails Advisory Committee (NTAC) and a National Trails Office (NTO). The committee would absorb the NWWAC and be responsible for generating agreement on trail standards, classification systems, signage policy, development guidelines, quality assurance and marketing and promotion. The national office would coordinate and drive the implementation of the Strategy, administer funds and liaise with relevant government departments. In addition, the Strategy notes that national coordination “requires sustained effort, considerable goodwill and the willingness to learn from both success and failure” (p. 44).

Since the launch of the Strategy in 2007, considerable progress has been made in implementing the recommendations. The NTAC and NTO were established and are working well, Management Standards have been created and trails nationwide are inspected against them, a National Trails Register and an NTO website have been established, a GIS system stores data about trails, and a National Trails Signage policy is complete, among other initiatives. The NTAC and ISC continue to meet, providing an important coordinating and information exchange forum for the agencies involved with trails in Ireland.

Australia

Victorian Trails Strategy

The Victorian Trails Coordinating Committee (VTCC) was established in 1997 under the auspices of the Minister of the Environment. The Committee included representatives from Parks Victoria, Tourism Victoria, the Department of Sustainability and Environment, Sport and Recreation Victoria, VicRoads, and trail user groups. The VTCC published the Victorian Trails Strategy in 2004 as a planning document to guide trail development from 2005-2010. The development involved consultation with government agencies and community recreation groups and included reviews of existing trail-related legislation and State Government policy commitments. No timeline for this process was given.

The VTCC developed the Strategy to identify issues, strengths, weaknesses and opportunities for the next five years of trail development. It aimed to alleviate regional inconsistencies in trail

development, increase community involvement and public awareness about trails, and advocate for consistent funding mechanisms. The Committee also saw the Strategy as an opportunity to promote trails as part of Victoria's ecological and cultural heritage.

The Strategy provides information on the health benefits of trails using studies on health and recreation activities. User surveys from individual trails within and outside the state highlight the increased demand for trails and their potential economic benefits. Next, the Strategy profiles existing trails in national parks and state forests, canoe and kayak river trails and marine trails, and trails in metropolitan areas. The section on trail use details the specific needs of diverse trail users, with profiles on walkers, cyclists and mountain bikers, horse riders, and canoeists/kayakers and divers. The promotion of shared trail use and greater understanding of other trail users through education is highlighted as "essential for the sustainable management of the trail network" (p. 20). This section lists a number of management strategies for maximizing harmony between different user groups.

Finally, the five-year plan identifies specific initiatives with a rationale for action and lists lead and support bodies responsible for implementation. Some of these actions include encouraging the diversity and accessibility of trail experiences; undertaking research initiatives to increase knowledge of trail user needs and the environmental social and economic effects of trails; and focusing marketing opportunities on social health and regional economic benefits.

Western Australia Trails Strategy

The Department of Sport and Recreation, with support from the Department of Environment and Conservation and the Western Australia Planning Commission, published the Western Australia Trails Plan in 2008. It provides strategic direction for the Western Australia trails sector for 2009-2015, premised on the idea that trails "enrich the community through the delivery of economic, social, health and environmental benefits to individuals, the state and nation" (p. 6).

To detail the state of trail usage and the benefits of trails, the Strategy relies on a number of studies by other government departments and research institutes. Information on physical activity is taken from the state's 2006 Adult Physical Activity Survey, and the health benefits of trails are derived from several studies on the health outcomes of exercise. Information from the Market Equity Trails Research study of 2004 and user research reports from major Western Australia trails provide information on the revenue, investment and economic impact of trails.

The Strategy articulates the direction for trails stakeholders rather than prescriptive action. It lists six opportunities for trail enhancement: community engagement, access, governance, funding, articulating the benefits, and promotion and education. For each opportunity, several desired improvements are noted. Suggested strategic initiatives and implementation roles complete the Strategy.

While there are few details on the research and consultation process used to create the Strategy, it does identify the lack of collaboration as a barrier to trail development. Engaging trail users is difficult due to the lack of a conventional club structure and high numbers of casual users. Volunteer turnover is a problem, and limits the opportunity for unified leadership. Governance structures also need improvement, as a multitude of uncoordinated small advocacy groups are less effective in overseeing trails. To improve community engagement, the Strategy suggests developing an evidence base to demonstrate the value of trails to users. To improve coordination, the Strategy recommends establishing a national representative body for trails. It also notes, “representation by a prominent and active community-based body would provide a focal point for the sector” (p. 16) and establishes a higher profile for trails by providing credible and authoritative messages on behalf of the trails sector.

The Department of Sport and Recreation is currently drafting an implementation plan and making progress on some of the Strategy’s initiatives. The Department is also supporting the creation of Trails Western Australia Inc., but it has not officially commenced.

United States

Oregon Trails 2005-2014: A Statewide Action Plan

The Oregon Parks and Recreation Department (OPRD) has been responsible for state trails planning since the State Trails Act of 1971. In 1995, the department published the first Oregon State Off-Highway Vehicle Study and Oregon Recreation Trails Plan. These plans set strategic directions for recreational trails for a ten-year period. In late 2001, recreation providers expressed the desire for OPRD to update the plans during consultations on the Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan. Changing user demands and a growing population also contributed to the need for an update.

OPRD staff embarked on a two-year process of consultation and collaboration with trail providers, interest groups and citizens to create three separate strategies for water, motorized

and non-motorized trails. The strategies were published in a single document and marked Oregon as the first state to complete a state-wide water trails plan. States in the US are legislated to produce Recreational Trails Plans or Programs to be eligible to receive Federal Recreational Trails dollars.

First, three separate Trails Plan Steering Committees were established. Members were selected to ensure adequate agency and geographic coverage and trail group representation. The Committees met formally three times during the two-year process. The first round of meetings brought everyone up-to-date with the existing research and proposed planning framework. Several research studies had been carried out by OPRD and other state agencies in the years leading up to the strategy update process. These included the Oregon Plan for Physical Activity and information collected through the Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan consultations. Two studies were commissioned for the planning processes: the 2004 Oregon Statewide Trail User and Non-motorized Boater Survey, administered by the University of Oregon's Survey Research Laboratory, and the 2004 Oregon Statewide Trails Inventory Project, compiled by researchers at Oregon State University. The user survey assessed the needs and opinions of Oregon's citizens about trail opportunities and management, while the inventory project systematically reviewed the entire state public trail system.

Before the Committees met for a second time, OPRD staff conducted nine Regional Trail Issues Workshops across the state. Each workshop included an afternoon session open to all public recreation providers and an evening session open to the general public. Participants identified challenges facing trail development and prioritized those they considered high-impact. More than 700 comments on trail issues were gathered through these consultations.

OPRD staff produced a series of issue summary papers detailing the top issues identified through regional consultations. In the second round of Committee meetings, members reviewed these summary papers and identified the top statewide and regional issues to include in the plan. Next, they proposed a set of strategies for addressing these issues. Information from the regional consultations and progress reports from the Committees were posted on a Trails Planning Website for further public comment.

The third round of meetings allowed members to consider the results of the Trail User and Non-motorized Boater Survey and the Inventory Project and decide on grant evaluation criteria for two new grants serving the motorized and non-motorized recreational trails communities. Committee members also had the chance to review the draft strategies and provide additional feedback.

Developing concurrent plans helped save valuable time and financial resources associated with travel and administration for regional consultations. Costs were further reduced through savings from a combined motorized, non-motorized and water trails user survey. This process also hoped to provide benefits to users by gathering comparative information to “emphasize areas of common ground and understanding” (p. 3) and benefits to planners working on various trail types by providing a single planning document.

On Nature’s Trail: A Statewide Strategic Plan for Colorado Trails

Colorado has had an active state trails program since 1971. In 1998, the State Trails Program initiated a two-year process to update its 1992 State Recreational Trails Master Plan. A citizen Steering Committee helped guide the process and experts in strategic planning provided advice to State Trails Program staff.

Two surveys were conducted to gather broad public input. A statewide telephone survey determined patterns of trail use, values regarding trails, and priorities for allocating resources. This survey revealed that seventy-five percent of Coloradans consider outdoor activities to be important to their quality of life. A separate mail survey targeted registered off-highway vehicle owners to review their patterns of usage and identify attributes of preferred riding areas. Additional research included surveys conducted by Colorado State Parks, the Colorado Division of Wildlife, and Great Outdoors Colorado.

Input from stakeholders such as land managers, trail developers, trail user organizations and environmental groups was gathered at the biennial Colorado State Trails Symposium. Over 160 stakeholders also completed a comprehensive questionnaire addressing trends in trail management and use and priorities for resource allocation. Four regional focus group meetings gave stakeholders additional time to discuss trail-related issues and strategic options.

The Plan details seven strategic goals for Colorado trails: leadership, planning, environment, communications, stewardship, ethics and cooperation, and funding. Possible action strategies are listed for each goal, and the State Trails Program is identified as the lead organization responsible for implementation.

The State Trails Program is beginning the process to update the 2000 Plan shortly. It is likely to take place over the next year, and involve a Strategic Master Plan for the Colorado Trails Program and the Statewide Trails System.

Findings

This scan originally anticipated finding a high degree of variance distinguishing different approaches to collaborative trail planning among Canadian provinces and in other countries. However, as the reader will observe, the development of these different long-term trail strategies have many similarities. Generally, each plan followed a similar process of gathering information and consulting with stakeholders and trail users to identify pressing issues. The resulting plans lay out guiding principles of trail development that are accompanied by suggested actions. Most plans also provide direction for future decision-making.

These similarities can be summarized across five categories:

- 1) The rationale for a collaborative plan
- 2) The trail type(s) targeted
- 3) The partners who initiate or lead the planning process
- 4) The steps of the process
- 5) The final plan

The rationale for a collaborative plan

Most trail strategies cite the *lack of comprehensive vision, coordination, and strategic direction* as the over-arching reasons behind the initiation of collaborative planning. New Brunswick's Long-Term Management Strategy for its three major trail networks states outright "While there are some mechanisms in place...where some of the stakeholders interact and address certain trail management issues, there has not been an overall coordinated approach by all stakeholders for the joint management of the three trail networks" (p. 2). In Ireland, the lack of coordination "results in poor linkages between recreational interest groups, community development groups, Local Authorities, private sector businesses and other stakeholders" (p. 33). In addition, "landowners and managers, trail users and developers have not discovered how to work together effectively in the trail budgeting and funding process" (ibid.).

To overcome the lack of coordination, strategy development involves a large number of diverse stakeholders and the resulting strategies are broad in scope. In British Columbia, the Recreational Trails Strategy is meant to "establish clear strategic direction for planning, developing, acquiring, maintaining, managing, promoting, and using trails in BC" (Background Report p. 8). It acts as a "hub of a wheel" that "connects a broad range of organizations that have historically worked independently, drawing them together to endorse a shared vision to...develop and manage B.C.'s world-class trail network" (Background Report p. 7). Similarly,

Ontario's Strategy provides "a coordinated approach, focused on strategic directions" (p. 12) and the plan for Saskatchewan's trails functions as a mechanism for stakeholders to "work cooperatively and collaboratively towards common ends in a non-competitive manner" (p. 18). The Irish Trails Strategy cites establishing "clear strategic direction for coordinating, developing, managing, monitoring and promoting trails" (p. 42) as its purpose, as do two Australian States (Victoria and Western Australia present "high-level" directions for a five-year period).

A second common factor for creating trail plans is the opportunity to *promote the tourism, health, and economic benefits* of trails. As mentioned in the introduction, trails in Canada and around the world are valued for supporting economic growth, inspiring travel and the discovery of national history, encouraging active living, and contributing to green initiatives. Most strategies state trail benefits in their introduction. The Western Australia Trails Strategy tells readers "trails enrich the community through the delivery of economic, social, health, and environmental benefits to individuals, state, and nation" (p. 6). The Trails Strategy for British Columbia asserts that trails "provide opportunities for outdoor activities that contribute to physical and mental health," "offer significant tourism benefits and opportunities for economic diversification" and "help reduce greenhouse gas emissions" (p. 16). Both the Long-Term Management Strategy for trails in New Brunswick and the Alberta Recreation Corridors Legislative Review leverage the health and economic benefits of trails to advocate for sustained investment and strategic management.

Articulating these benefits is difficult without evidence. Obtaining this evidence can be one of the recommended strategic actions, such as in the Western Australian Trails Strategy. It calls for a "clear and empirically-supported picture of the value created by trails" (p. 19) that can be conveyed in a straightforward manner to local businesses and other stakeholders. Other trail plans commissioned studies as part of the planning process - the Oregon Trails Statewide Action Plan relies on information from the Statewide Trail User and Non-motorized Boater Survey, and results of the Recreation Trails Strategy Survey informs the development of the BC Recreational Trails Strategy Background Report.

In absence of information specific to the value of trails, several strategies rely on studies from other sectors. For example, statistics on how many Western Australians walk, jog and cycle for recreation (62.8%, 11% and 9.3% respectively) come from the State's Adult Physical Activity Survey and several academic studies provide information on the health benefits of exercise. As well, statistics on the economic benefits of trails (construction, user spending, revenue generation) are extrapolated from previously commissioned studies on popular trails (such as the

Bibbulmun Track User Research Report) and trails in general (such as Market Equity Trails Research).

Other common reasons for initiating a collaborative planning process include those related to *funding* (eligibility for Federal funding and allocating limited resources in Oregon, the cost of liability insurance in Ontario, Saskatchewan and Alberta, and inconsistent funding mechanisms in Victoria, Australia) and *trail development and maintenance* (regional inconsistencies in Victoria, the need to build more trails in Saskatchewan, Ireland and Oregon, and the need to bring existing trails up to standard in Alberta and Ireland). In addition, issues of *environmental stewardship*, such as balancing use with resource protection and preserving natural and cultural heritage, were cited often in both Canadian and international strategies.

Finally, the need to deal with the *increased conflict* between users and between users and adjacent landowners, which arises from the *changing nature of users* (growing population density and higher demands for motorized and non-walking trail use) was a driving force behind provincial trail strategies and the nation-wide Irish Trails Strategy. While each strategy suggests different actions to resolve conflict over the long-term, many involved trail users in developing their strategies as a first step. Broad public consultation ensured support for the strategies, promoted learning among users, and guaranteed that strategies addressed the needs of multiple users. Several strategies listed collaboration and mutual respect as guiding principles, and called for research on the needs of the fast-growing motorized user population. Steering or Advisory Committees that represented the range of trail users, and other stakeholders such as First Nations, were also integral to early conflict resolution.

The trail type(s) targeted

Strategies, in their efforts to increase coordination and comprehensive vision, target *trails that are used in a variety of ways*. The Alberta Recreation Corridors Legislative Review lists hiking, biking, cross-country skiing, snowmobiling, canoeing, equestrian or off-highway vehicle use as recreation corridor activities included in the review. The Irish Trails Strategy defines a recreational trail as “primarily intended for recreational purposes, including walking, hiking, cycling, canoeing and horse-riding” (p. 12), and focuses on non-motorized trails. The decision to focus on non-motorized, motorized, or water trails, or to target a combination of these uses, impacts the extent to which strategies increase cooperation among trail groups and resolve user conflict.

The BC Background Report focuses on land-based trails for both motorized and non-motorized use. It notes that water-based trails were originally considered, but no feedback from groups

representing these trails was received through the Trails Survey. As well, only land-based trail documents were reviewed, due to time and resource constraints. The Background Report states “there is nothing to preclude consideration of water-based trails” (p. 11) in the next phase of strategy development, but the resulting Draft Strategy refrains from defining trail activities in an effort to be consistent with the goal of an integrated network of trails across the province.

BC’s lack of information on water-based trails highlights *the resource constraints of strategy development*. This constraint propelled Oregon to develop three concurrent plans for non-motorized, motorized and water-based trails. In its description of the concurrent planning process the Oregon strategy lists four benefits. Only one benefit is for users: it provides groups with “comparative information to emphasize areas of common ground and understanding” (p. 3). The others are for trail planners and strategy developers: providing a ‘one-stop’ planning document, saving costs related to a combined user survey, and saving costs related to concurrent but separate regional issues workshops. Three different steering committees guided each planning effort. The resulting strategies are combined in a single document, but are not integrated. This process saved costs associated with strategy development, but did not promote learning, dialogue and collaboration among diverse trail users. Integration of strategies for different trails and trail uses may not be appropriate in some cases, but gathering representatives of these many trail users together during their separate planning processes and promoting learning and mutual respect could be beneficial to the trail community as a whole.

The partners who initiate or lead the planning process

Canadian provincial trail strategies have largely been initiated and led by *government departments or agencies*. In Ontario, the Ministry of Tourism and Recreation established an Inter-Ministerial Working Group on Trails and the Ministry of Health Promotion published the final strategy. In British Columbia, three provincial agencies partnered to create the Province’s Trails Strategy: the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and the Arts, Ministry of Environment-B.C. Parks, and the Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure. Several other agencies and Crown corporations supported the process, including Tourism British Columbia, Ministry of Forests and Range and the Ministry of Agriculture and Lands. The Alberta Recreation Corridors Legislative Review was established by the Ministry of Community Development and led by a Review Committee of Members of the Legislative Assembly. In New Brunswick, the departments responsible for Natural Resources, Public Safety, Tourism and Parks, and Transportation collaborated to create *Reinvesting in the NB Trail System: A Long-Term Management Strategy*.

Abroad, government also plays a main role in initiating collaborative planning on trails. The Irish Sports Council and one of its sub-committees, the National Waymarked Ways Advisory Committee, started the Irish Trails Strategy process – and the resulting strategy recommends the establishment of a lead department, an Irish Trails Advisory Committee, and a National Trails Office to continue trail planning and management. The Department of Sustainability and Environment created the Victorian Trails Coordinating Committee to strategize on trails in Victoria, Australia, and the Department of Environment and Conservation and the Planning Commission supported the Department of Sport and Recreation in trail planning in Western Australia. In America, many states have long histories of trail planning by state governments. The Oregon Parks and Recreation Department has had responsibility for recreation trails planning since 1971; this was also the year the Colorado State Parks Department developed its first State Trails Plan. Federal agencies, such as the US Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, and National Park Service also help in managing and planning for trails.

A number of trails strategies involved *non-profit trail associations* in the early stages of planning, and all engaged a variety of stakeholders throughout the process. In Saskatchewan, the Parks and Recreation Association facilitated the incorporation of the Saskatchewan Trails Association (STA), which took over the development of the Trans Canada Trail and other trails in 2004. The STA proposed the development of a provincial strategy a few years later and led the process after receiving a grant from the Recreational Investment Partnership Program. The government-led process in Ontario involved non-governmental trail stakeholders as members of the Minister's Advisory Committee, and a Trails Strategy Committee that included both government members and trail advocacy organizations developed the B.C. Strategy. In addition to involving trail leaders and advocates through steering committees, all collaborative planning processes involved extensive stakeholder and public consultation.

The steps of the process

Collaborative planning for trails in Canada and abroad has followed a path predictable for long-term strategic planning. Each process includes *research and data collection* on current trail networks, trail users, the value of trails and best practices of other trail strategies, the *involvement of leading stakeholders* as advisors and a *wider engagement process* for other stakeholders and the general public. Each step helps identify and refine a list of issues for resolution, values and principles of trail planning and recommendations for further action. Key to the success of these strategies is the endorsement of a variety of government and trail stakeholders.

Two thorough processes are found in British Columbia and Oregon. The B.C. process is divided into four phases. First, a background report was prepared that covered: existing trails and trail-related legislation, recreation trends related to trails, successful trail strategies in other jurisdictions, a SWOT analysis of the trail network, the challenges and benefits of trails, criteria to prioritize trail networks for development, and links to other initiatives. This information was compiled through internet-based research, existing trail-related documents, and a trail survey completed by 96 respondents from 76 organizations (both non-government and government). In addition to providing background information, this research process identified key success factors and strategies in trail planning (see Background Report p.32-39) that informed the development of the next steps in the process.

The second phase involved in-depth consultation with stakeholders, agencies, First Nations and the wider community, as well as discussions with the Trail Advisory Committee. The Recreational Trails Strategy emerged from these conversations, and was revised based on feedback from extensive information sessions held across the province.

The third phase involves an implementation plan over an expected five to ten year time frame, with actions supported by all levels of government and communities and in accordance with the government's New Relationship with First Nations. The final phase will develop provisions for monitoring and updating the strategy.

Oregon's planning process was extensive but less integrated than BC's process. The Oregon Parks and Recreation Department (OPRD) simultaneously developed three separate plans for motorized, non-motorized, and water trails. The need for an updated trails plan arose from regional recreational issues workshops held as part of the Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan planning process. These workshops unintentionally served as pre-consultative conversations towards planning for Oregon's trails. A recreational participation study highlighted the need for an updated trails plan by identifying the importance of trail-related activities to Oregonians. The OPRD created three separate steering committees (one for each trail plan) to assist with the concurrent planning process. The members of these committees represented agency or organizational diversity, geographic coverage and a variety of trail-user groups. Each committee met several times over the two-year process to discuss the results of the research and consultation sessions.

To identify, define, and prioritize trail issues, OPRD staff hosted a series of nine Regional Trails Issue Workshops across the state. The workshops included an afternoon dedicated to public

recreation providers and an evening session that was open to the general public. The information gathered at these workshops (a total of 733 trail issue comments) was posted on a trails planning website for further public comment. The website built interest in the trails plan over the course of the two-year effort and disseminated major planning results. OPRD staff collected the feedback and prepared sets of issue summary papers for each trail type. The steering committees discussed and voted on the top regional motorized, non-motorized and water trails issues to include in the plan. Finally, OPRD staff and steering committee members developed a set of goals, objectives and strategies to respond to the identified trail issues.

In addition to the consultations, the Oregon process included a Statewide Trail User and Non-motorized Boater Survey, a Statewide Trails Inventory project, two grant programs and selection criteria (for ATV and non-motorized projects) and a Recreational Trails How-To Manual that provides information and resources for trail planning, acquisition, construction and management.

Other considerations in collaborative planning processes include *transparency* (Ontario published information on the province's strategy on the Environmental Bill of Rights Registry), *stakeholder feedback* (Saskatchewan provided stakeholders with the draft strategy before final publication) and *citizen engagement* (Colorado's process involved a Citizen Steering Committee and public input gathered by the University of Colorado's Center for Public-Private Sector Cooperation).

The final plan

Trail strategies provide a framework to focus trail stakeholders' efforts for the next five to ten years. The length and scope of the strategies can vary depending on the type of trails targeted by the plan, but all include *guiding principles or values* for trails and *recommendations for future action*. Many strategies also lay out *plans for future decision-making*, and several note how trail strategies can *support other government policy priorities*.

Saskatchewan's strategy includes seven guiding principles and recommended actions on six major themes. The public consultation process for the Alberta Recreation Corridors Legislative Review developed fifteen guiding principles and a set of nine recommendations on key challenges facing trails. Similarly, the Western Australia Trails Strategy lays out ten guiding principles and a set of strategies for six areas of opportunity. While many guiding principles and

recommended actions contain similar themes, such as sustainability, efficiency, and increased access, they are contextualized through extensive public consultation.

Many plans provide guides for implementation and future decision-making. The Ontario Trails Strategy discusses actors and their potential next steps in its final section entitled “A shared responsibility.” The Irish Trails Strategy recommends designating a lead government department, establishing an Advisory Committee and a National Trails Office that would be responsible for coordinating the implementation of the strategy’s recommendations. Both the Saskatchewan and Western Australia strategies include suggested implementation roles for key initiatives, and the B.C. strategy recommends the establishment of a provincial trail advisory body to work on implementation with local trail stewardship groups.

Finally, many strategies identify other government policy priorities that strategic trail development supports. For example, the B.C. strategy supports the provincial government’s Tourism Action Plan, Climate Action Program, Mountain Pine Beetle Action Plan, and the 2010 Winter Olympics. Likewise, the Ontario strategy supports ACTIVE2010, an initiative to increase physical activity among Ontarians, the Strong Rural Communities Plan, and the Northern Prosperity Plan, among others.

Lessons

The above categories bring to light common attributes of successful collaborative efforts. Trail leaders interested in a national dialogue on cooperation and planning will need to carefully articulate their rationale, ensure that different trail users can learn from one another, establish broad but cohesive leadership and devise a well-supported process. The following lessons should be an integral part of conversations on a national approach to trails and trail collaboration.

1. Collaboration and cooperation take time.

Most collaborative planning processes take two years or longer. They involve a period of research and data collection, stakeholder engagement, and broad public consultation.

Taking the time to generate support for the process can translate into shared ownership for the result. Leaders of a cross-country approach to trail leadership need to recognize reasonable timelines and budgets for generating this support.

2. Solid research is a necessary foundation.

Strong strategies typically include extensive research that detail the current state of trails, trail users, recreation trends, and the value of trails to communities. This research is imperative to articulating the benefits of trails to potential funding sources. Primary research, through interviews and surveys with stakeholders, government representatives, and users, provides an empirical basis for strategic actions, and can be used subsequently by local trail advocates and associations. A main asset of primary research is its ability to promote cooperation and generate shared ownership for the results through the interaction of stakeholders that data collection creates.

3. Good planning requires cohesive leadership.

Across several different jurisdictions, small committees involving government representatives have largely been responsible for drafting collaborative trail strategies. In this way, government participation matters — and typically brings both legitimacy and financial support to the development process. But government cannot and should not undertake to develop trail strategies or other collaborative efforts alone. Instead, good cross-sectoral participation, representing different interests and regions — where trail associations and advocates share in the design and oversight of the process — rather than simply participate or provide deputations is key to creating more cohesive leadership to the trails movement.

4. Collaboration is the result of consultation.

Public consultation is a main attribute of strategy development. Bringing disparate groups together helped identify common challenges and potential solutions. Often a widely endorsed vision for trails emerged from these conversations. Consultation can help alleviate user conflict, educate users on trail etiquette and safety, and ensure smooth implementation of strategic actions in the future.

5. Provisions for implementation and future decision-making add value and solidify commitment.

Identifying lead organizations for actions galvanizes support for strategy implementation and empowers stakeholders to take action right away. Many strategies also suggest establishing new government organizations to oversee the strategy implementation process, including reviews and updates. These new organizations serve as mechanisms for future decision-making with the support of many stakeholders. Any group outside government that takes a leadership role is well advised to enlist government support early in collaborative planning.

Conclusion

This paper brings procedural considerations for collaborative planning to light. Though many jurisdictions have developed Trail Strategies not only to plan and enhance trails, but also as a way to increase collaboration and resolve user conflict, this may not be the most useful or most immediate direction for Canadian trails at the national level. Instead, trail leaders can learn from this review, noting the elements common to promoting co-operation. These elements – taking time to talk with different users, maintaining open communication and good will during collaborative initiatives, commissioning solid research and analysis on the state of trails across the country, enlisting the support of government, agreeing on a structure for leadership and future decision-making – are not new or obscure. But they warrant careful consideration during conversations on working together to enhance trails and the national trail community. The National Trail Leadership Roundtable aims to provide trail leaders with a space for in-depth, facilitated discussion on collaboration. The findings and lessons from this review are integral to a productive meeting.

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