

Smithers Mountain Bike Association

5 Year Management Plan (2018-2023)



Prepared by the Smithers Mountain Bike Association Executive

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Website: www.smithersmountainbike.ca

INTRODUCTION

Purpose

The Smithers Mountain Bike Association (SMBA) and Recreation Sites and Trails BC (RSTBC) have signed a Trail Management Agreement (PA14DSS-11 hereafter the “Agreement”) under Section 118 of the Forest and Range Practices Act (FRPA). The Agreement represents a trail management arrangement over a 10 year term (October 1, 2013 – September 30, 2023) and provides the SMBA with the right to non-commercial development, maintenance and management of recreation trails, and related improvements for mountain biking. Under the Agreement, the SMBA has committed to develop and regularly update a 5 Year Management Plan. The purpose of this plan is to guide the management of mountain biking trails and activities in three trail networks on Hudson Bay Mountain: The Bluff Recreation Site, the Ptarmigan Road Recreation Trails, and the Piper Recreation Site.

The Management Plan forms an appendix to the aforementioned Trail Management Agreement between the SMBA and Recreation Sites and Trails BC (RSTBC) of the B.C. Ministry of Forests, Lands, Natural Resource Operations and Rural Development (FLNRORD) and is intended to inform a more detailed Annual Operational Plan (see Appendix 1).

Context

A study commissioned by RSTBC in 2011 estimated the GDP contribution of recreation sites and trails use to the Provincial economy at \$14.08 million annually. By 2016, studies revealed that the North Shore areas alone generated over \$12 million in direct spending from mountain bikers (see: www.mtba.ca). Studies from the interior of BC, including Williams Lake, Revelstoke, and Rossland, confirm the growth of the sport since 2010, the contribution of trails to economic diversification in small communities, and the role that trails play in attracting and retaining professional workers. The case for ongoing investment in mountain bike infrastructure remains strong.

The SMBA is a registered non-profit society established in 2009 to support the Bulkley Valley’s mountain bike community through trail development, trail maintenance, and events. Specifically, the objectives of the SMBA are to:

- encourage participation in mountain biking to people of all ages and abilities,
- promote responsible mountain biking practices,
- participate in the planning process for the management of recreational lands as it relates to mountain bike access and use,
- organize volunteers to aid in restoration, development, and maintenance of legitimate mountain bike trail systems, and
- educate riders on mountain bike safety, best practices, and trail maintenance and development.

The SMBA is run by a board of directors elected annually by SMBA members (average of 170 members per year) at the Annual General Meeting. Through government and community business support, the SMBA has a proven ability to reach the above objectives. For example, since 2011 the SMBA has:

- secured and invested >\$500,000 into trail networks,

- vastly expanded trail networks, which includes 54 kilometres of trail,
- constructed and maintained a skills development Bike Park,
- initiated a successful Sprockids program, which includes an average of 60 youth per year,
- held women’s specific skills training camps and rides with over 60 participants,
- significantly increased the number of mountain bike riders in the community,
- built community through annual events and races,
- garnered media attention and tourism through hosting the BC Bike Ride and being featured by Mountain Biking BC (www.mountainbikingbc.ca), and
- witnessed a marked increase in visits from out of town riders.

The scope for this management plan is limited to the requirements under the SMBA’s agreement with RSTBC and will focus on SMBA’s approach to management of trails and trail development. The SMBA will maintain a strategic plan that will be adaptively managed and address other aspects of the SMBA mandate related to tourism, economic development, and membership engagement.

5 YEAR MANAGEMENT GOALS AND STRATEGIES

This management plan outlines three goals for the SMBA and lists the strategies that SMBA will use to achieve them. The strategies will be adaptively managed in partnership with RSTBC on an on-going basis.

Goal 1 – Maintain and enhance trails under agreement with RSTBC

Strategy 1: Maintain the Annual Operating Plan based on the SMBA Trail Policy. The Operating Plan (Appendix 1) outlines the trail maintenance and enhancement, and new trail development proposals on an annual and five-year period. The trail works outlined in the Operating Plan are informed by the SMBA Trail Policy (Appendix 2), which specifies how consultation with the SMBA membership will inform trail maintenance and enhancement. The Operating Plan is designed to maintain the current distribution of trail ratings of 35% black, 55% blue, and 20% green across all trail networks under Agreement. The SMBA will maintain trails using a variety of approaches including engagement with membership, paid contractors, and volunteer efforts.

Strategy 2: Seek authorization from RSTBC to develop new trails for integration into the Partnership Agreement. The Operating Plan identifies new trail development proposals that will be submitted to RSTBC for Section 57 and 56 authorizations.

Strategy 3: Work in a coordinated manner with RSTBC to administer funding for trail construction and maintenance. Detailed project budgets will be developed in collaboration with RSTBC to ensure transparency in the use of all funding for trail construction and maintenance. Standard priorities include: danger tree assessment & falling, signage (including kiosks), contracts for trail construction, tool purchase and aerial lifts of materials.

Strategy 4: Seek Section 56 authorization in 2018/19 to incorporate the existing Backdoor trail into the Agreement.

Goal 2 – Ensure all trails under Agreement are managed for safety and environmental stewardship

Strategy 1: The SMBA will undertake annual inspection of trails and technical features in a manner consistent with the requirements of the Agreement and International Mountain Bike Association (IMBA) and Whistler Standards. Records of inspections will be maintained by the SMBA and issues will be incorporated into the Operating Plan for action.

Strategy 2: Hazard trees and blow-down are persistent safety issues throughout the trail networks under the Agreement. SMBA will work with RSTBC on an on-going and annual basis to develop operational approaches to address blow-down and hazard trees. The SMBA will ensure volunteers are adequately trained to address these issues.

Strategy 3: Consistent and coordinated with strategies under Goal 1, the SMBA will work with RSTBC, the SMBA membership, volunteers, and paid contractors to ensure all trails are maintained to a safety standard consistent with the requirements under the Agreement. Under this Management Plan the SMBA is utilizing two volunteer mechanisms for maintenance of trails under Agreement:

- Adopt a Trail (ATT): A group of volunteers who maintain a designated trail, including monitoring for safety issues. AAT will clear fallen trees and perform basic maintenance to ensure safety;
- Trail Brigade: A smaller group of volunteers with trail building experience that perform enhanced maintenance, based on approvals form RSTBC through the Annual Operating Plan.

Strategy 4: SMBA will maintain signage on all trails and features in a manner consistent with the Agreement to ensure safe route finding. SMBA will augment trail signage with on-line tools, including the SMBA website and Trailforks. SMBA will work with RSTBC over the term of this Management Plan to incorporate egress and emergency routes into the trail signage and mapping system.

Strategy 5: The SMBA will work with RSTBC to manage natural disturbance events and other safety hazards that require trail closures and other emergency measures. SMBA will use all available communication tools to communicate safety issues to the SMBA membership.

Strategy 6: The SMBA will work with RSTBC and FLNRORD to ensure the requirements of the *Water Sustainability Act* are reflected in all activities under the Operating Plan.

Goal 3 – Undertake community, First Nations, and stakeholder engagement in support of this Management Plan and the Agreement

Strategy 1: Engage with First Nations in cooperation with RSTBC and FLNRORD in any new trail development or maintenance. Seek opportunities to incorporate traditional and cultural values into trail development and signage where possible. Work with First Nations to engage youth in all aspects of the mountain bike community.

Strategy 2: Engage with the SMBA membership through social media, events, and email to promote trail maintenance and stewardship.

Strategy 3: Work with other stakeholders that have overlapping interests with the trails under this Agreement or identified in the Operating Plan. Represent SMBA in the broader recreational community within the Bulkley Valley in an effort to promote mountain biking and seek synergies with other groups that can enhance trails.

Strategy 4: Work with RSTBC and BC Parks to maintain access to Cronin Pass trail. Work with RSTBC to seek other opportunities to expand mountain biking into Babine Park.

APPENDIX 1 – SMBA ANNUAL OPERATING PLAN

Access Annual Operating Plan via dropbox: <https://www.dropbox.com/sh/syezdszolgyr4la/AABr-u6NLfLwie5SD1qvvvzma?dl=0>

APPENDIX 2 – SMBA TRAIL POLICY

SMBA POLICY FOR TRAIL MAINTENANCE, ADJUSTMENTS, AND DEVELOPMENT

This policy details the process by which proposed trail maintenance, adjustments, and development are approved annually by the SMBA and outlines maintenance standards to be upheld on existing trails. This policy directly informs the SMBA's *Annual Operating Plan* and is crucial to meeting Goal 1 in the *SMBA Management Plan*.

PROCESS FOR PROPOSED TRAIL ADJUSTMENTS AND DEVELOPMENT

Step 1: Submit Proposals

Proposals for trail adjustments or new trail development can be put forward to the SMBA Executive by October 1st of each year. Proposals may be submitted by any SMBA member or the *SMBA Trail Management Subcommittee*. In order for the Executive and SMBA membership to make an informed decision, each proposal for a new trail must include the following information:

- difficulty level,
- style,
- length,
- TTFs to be included,
- linework/route (e.g. walked, flagged, GPSed),
- value or special components of proposed trail (e.g. connections to trail networks, viewpoints, terrain),
- maintenance considerations (e.g. overhead hazards, foliage, soil, drainage),
- estimated costs,
- funding options, and
- environmental considerations. Recognizing that meeting the trail objectives would be terrain dependent.

For proposed trail adjustments, the following information must be presented to the SMBA Executive and Membership:

- Location
- Value/Purpose
- Description of how the adjustment will enhance or alter difficulty of trail
- Description of how the adjustment will enhance or alter style of trail

Step 2: SMBA Executive Review

Executive to review proposals and come to an agreement on which proposed trail adjustments and/or new trail development will be presented to SMBA membership. This review will occur prior to the SMBA Annual General Meeting (AGM).

Step 3: SMBA Membership Feedback

The Executive will review any proposed trail adjustments and new trail developments with the SMBA membership at the AGM. Detailed feedback will be recorded and communicated to the Executive.

Step 4: SMBA Executive Approval and Incorporation into Operating Plan

The Executive will review membership feedback and finalize decision on proposed trail adjustments and new trail development with the Trail Management Subcommittee. Approved proposals will be incorporated into the *Annual Operating Plan* for the following season.

Step 5: Funding Strategy

The Executive will prepare a funding strategy to implement the *Annual Operating Plan* including trail maintenance, approved adjustments, and approved new trail development. The Executive will work with the Trail Management Subcommittee to develop a plan to secure funding.

Step 6: Implementation

The Trail Management Subcommittee will lead the implementation of the *Annual Operating Plan*. Maintenance will be implemented through work bees, the Adopt-A-Trail Program, the Trail Brigade and where necessary, preferred and experienced contractors. While the majority of trail adjustments and development will be executed by preferred and experienced contractors, the Trail Brigade will also actively partake in key projects. All trail maintenance will follow the SMBA standards outlined below. All trail adjustments and development will also reflect the Whistler Trail Standards and IMBA standards. Any work conducted, including adjustments, development, and maintenance, must be led by someone who is well-versed in the aforementioned trail standards and the practical application of them.

The Trail Management Subcommittee will be accountable to manage new trail development including; working with RSTBC to secure approvals; working with the Executive to engage stakeholders; and, implementing the funding strategy approved by the SMBA.

The Trail Management Subcommittee will regularly update the SMBA Executive on the progress of the *Annual Operating Plan*. These regular updates will allow for the Executive and Trail Management Subcommittee to be adaptable and address unforeseen circumstances that may require within season

changes to be made to the *Annual Operating Plan*. Examples of circumstances that may result in within season changes to the plan include, but are not limited to:

- 1) unanticipated funds becoming available for trail adjustments and/or development,
- 2) weather events that cause damage to existing technical trail features (TTFs), the fixing of which may need to be prioritized over other proposed work, and
- 3) limitations in the resources and/or capacity necessary to finish all of proposed work.

The need to communicate within season changes to the *Annual Operating Plan* to the SMBA membership will depend on the scale of the change and will be at the discretion of the Executive and the Trail Management Subcommittee.

TRAIL MAINTENANCE

As with trail adjustments and development, trail maintenance will be outlined and prioritized in the SMBA's *Annual Operating Plan*. Routine trail maintenance, as outlined in the RSTBC partnership agreement, should be considered in the development of the *Annual Operating Plan*. Annual inspections of existing trails and Technical Trail Features (TTFs) must be completed, including a description of trail/TTF condition and maintenance requirements. These inspections are submitted to RSTBC each year as a requirement of the partnership agreement and inform the maintenance requirements outlined in the SMBA's *Annual Operating Plan*. The Trail Management Subcommittee is responsible for ensuring the annual inspections occur each year.

Any trail maintenance that is conducted in the SMBA trail networks must follow the SMBA standards outlined below, including that conducted by the Adopt-A-Trail Program and the Trail Brigade. Trail maintenance standards for the SMBA are adapted from IMBA and Whistler trail standards and conform with standards outlined in the RSTBC partnership agreement. At the beginning of each season, these standards shall be reviewed by anybody participating in maintenance of the trails throughout the year. This review may include a field day with an experienced trail builder.

SMBA Trail Maintenance Standards

1. **Signs**—all signs will be checked prior to the season of operation to ensure they are in place and visible and any additional signs required to meet the objectives of this Agreement should be installed. Conduct minor repairs and stain/paint trail signs as required.
2. **Deadfall**—on a priority basis cut out windfall/deadfall over the trail, cut deadfall to a minimum of 1 metre from trail edge. Where possible, place felled trees downhill, out of sight of trail, and with butt ends pointing away from the trail.
3. **Brushing**—on a priority basis remove all juvenile trees and woody brush to a minimum of 1 metre from trail edge, within 3 centimetres of ground level. Scatter the cut material out of sight of the trail.
4. **Erosion control**—Maintain culverts and knicks to avoid water damage. This may include clean-outing and repairing any existing water bars and ditches as necessary to drain water away from the trail and prevent erosion.
5. **Route marking**—mark obscure routes with flagging or delineating tags as required.

6. **Litter cleanup**—remove litter and garbage at the trailhead and along the trail.
7. **Limbing**—remove tree limbs to allow 2.5 metres of overhead clearance above the trail, with 1.0-1.5 metres total clearance width. Scatter cut limbs a minimum of 1.0 metre from the trail edge, out of sight where possible. Ensure limbing cuts are clean, without scarring the main trunk of the tree.
8. **Technical Trail Features (TTFs)** – TTFs are to be evaluated regularly and kept in safe and working order (see Whistler Trail Standards)
9. **Fall Zones** – Keep fall zones around TTFs and berms free of debris and hazards
10. **Sightlines** – Where possible, maintain corridor sight lines.
11. **Hazards** - Repair or eliminate known trail hazards when possible. If the trail is unsafe, close trails until hazard has been repaired or eliminated.
12. **Trail tread maintenance**
 - Drain/harden mud holes and boggy areas.
 - Complete washout and/or slump repair.
 - Grub rocks, roots, stumps as necessary to allow grooming during operating season.
 - Undertake surface repair as required.

UNSANCTIONED TRAIL WORK

Recreational mountain bike trail construction, rehabilitation, or maintenance on Crown Land is not permitted unless authorized by the MFLNRORD District Recreation Officer. Any unsanctioned trail work is therefore illegal and puts the partnership agreement between the SMBA and RSTBC at-risk. As a result, any unsanctioned trail work shall be addressed immediately by the Executive. The SMBA holds the right to disassemble, dismantle, and/or remove any unsanctioned work in trail networks. The Executive will report details of the unsanctioned work to Recreation, Sites, and Trails BC, which may result in the Province ordering the offenders to restore the trail to its original form and/or fines of up to \$10,000. The SMBA Executive is responsible for regularly reminding members of the public and the membership that unsanctioned work is unacceptable.