

2019 Trail Coordinator's Report



I want to capture the highlights of the past year and say a few words about where we see trails going in the next few years. There are project details available for you to view after the business portion of this AGM as well as an opportunity for comments and suggestions.

The main accomplishments on the ground in 2019 were:

Ed Gregor Day:

- Changes were made to some TTFs on the upper half of Berma-Grin. Several doubles were converted to tabletops and a couple of other TTFs were upgraded.
- Work was done on the Connector Phase 1 (250 m in the Recreation Lease) to repair damage caused cattle in late 2018. A point worth noting is that cattle were also on this trail in late 2019 but it appears to have survived well enough after having had a year to harden up.
- A hardcore crew hiked up Big Bear to repair trail tread damage caused by dirt bikes. While working on the repairs, more dirt bikers were encountered!

For the **75-Cents** trail, we built a short section of singletrack trail to bypass the very steep section of OHV trail. The 75-Cents trail provides a mid-hill connection between the parking area at Pass Powderkeg and Buck-50. This new addition makes a circuit on the lower half of the hill more of a practical proposition – no more pushing the bike uphill - however the bypass is still not a breeze in the uphill direction. There are a few rock features and a berm to add some interest for descending riders. We appreciated the assistance of local contractor Darcy Wakaluk who was able to apply his expertise to something out of his ordinary mix of work - and on a much smaller excavator. The trail is built through some steep terrain including a rock band – some heavy digging and a fair bit of rockwork was required to lay in this route. Volunteers did the preparation and hand finishing for this trail.

The Connector – the ongoing saga. Well we managed to add another 0.9 km heading in the general direction of York Creek. Last year's project was entirely within the Public Land Use Zone. We applied to build 2.1 km but had to settle for getting down the first hill, across a stream and back up the other side. Preparatory work including route selection and corridor clearing was done by volunteers. A Junior Forest Ranger crew came out to help on August 12 and cut in 80 m of trail. They received some basic instruction in the use of trail building tools and techniques, and most seemed to enjoy the experience. Later in August the Backcountry Trail Experts with Luke Nelson on the excavator cut in the rest of the trail and did most of the hand finishing. There is additional hand finishing that will be required this spring as well as removal of some blowdown and a few remaining hazard trees. This area was shared with a herd of cattle (outside their grazing allotment) who helped pack the trail late in the season. Remedial work will be required as well as some tune up for the larger dirt features which will have settled over the winter. Near the stream crossing, drainage culverts were installed, and we will have to wait and see how they work out. If they don't handle the seepages near the stream, we may have to install some short sections of boardwalk. Silt fence was installed near the stream where there is a risk of

recently disturbed dirt washing into the creek. A break in the fence was left so that the cattle could cross the stream without trampling the fence.

Various:

- Ongoing maintenance at Pass Powderkeg including removal of hazard trees, blowdown and brushing.
- Tree limbing to improve spectator viewing at the midpoint of Berma-Grin.
- In June, by invitation from Alberta Parks, four UROC members attended a Trails Academy program put on by Penny Deck from the North Shore Mountain Biking Association.
- Some blowdown removal and temporary bridging installed to assist organizers of the Crownsnest 100 bike race.
- Installation of a refurbished bike rack at the Pass Powderkeg trailhead.
- Area reconnaissance for the Connector Phase 3 and other possible trail developments including the Star-Girardi Epic.
- Trail Usage data is still being collected.

In 2019 we recorded 866 volunteer field hours for trail related work. This is our second highest annual total (after 2016).

Recreation Advisory Group (now for the Castle-Livingstone-Porcupine Hills and other protected areas)

I am UROC's representative on this advisory group and more broadly for the "mountain biking sector". The group comprises various stakeholders including local government officials, landowners, industry, environmental and recreational groups. Its purpose is to consider area management plans and provide advice to AEP (and ultimately the Minister of Environment) on the implementation stage for the Recreation Management Plan. Group activity kicked off in early 2019 but then there was a hiatus for the provincial election. In July there was a "Meet the Minister" meeting in Pincher Creek attended by two ministers, two MLAs, Assistant Deputy Ministers and other senior AEP staff. This was an opportunity for the politicians to get a read on recreational issues in southwest Alberta.

In November, we got back on track with new direction communicated by the Minister. AEP are now working to solicit recreation proposals from RAG members (representing their sector interests). This will be a challenging exercise to reconcile the many competing land uses in particular how recreation is considered in relation to industrial and agricultural uses. Our Trails Masterplan (see below) will form the basis of UROC's proposal/presentation.

Issues

1. Short-cutting and unauthorized trails at Pass Powderkeg: One individual persists in creating new routes that short cut across the authorized trails – others follow. This issue has been raised with the Municipality however they have yet to provide any guidance.
2. Dirt bikes on York Creek area mountain biking trails. They are hard to catch and identify. Enforcement has not been effective at restricting OHVs to the designated trails. This does not seem likely to change in the near future, but AEP have certainly been getting the message.
3. Cattle straying off grazing allotment and damaging trails: The pallet gate incident on Buck-50 – say no more. The word is that cattle control may be resolved favourably with WC Ranching installing fencing along the east boundary of the Forest Reserve/grazing allotment.

4. Trail construction project approvals: This is a challenging and protracted process at the local level. Work at the Recreation Advisory Group may help to reshape the way we do business with AEP and provide some practical considerations and guidance for local AEP staff; however, this is not going to happen in the near term.

Looking Forward to 2020

Kids Corner: We have proposed to the municipality a youth-oriented development on a parcel of land at the lower end of the ski hill road. This will be a joint venture with the Crowsnest Museum – UROC will do the trail component and the museum will provide an outreach/interpretive component. Details are available following the business portion of this AGM.

Council has indicated that it supports the project and we will be notifying residents adjacent the project area so that if there are any concerns, these can be addressed before we start construction.

We hope to fund this project by project specific donations. We are targeting construction for early summer 2020.

We need a name for this new facility – preferably something that relates to the biking and mining heritage themes. Suggestions welcome.

Connector Phase 3: We have submitted a PLAR (TFA) application for what we hope will be the completion of the Connector (Pass Powderkeg to York Creek area). Details are available following the business portion of this AGM.

We have raised our sights on what we are trying to achieve with this trail – more singletrack (less use of substandard OHV trail and road) and more interesting terrain. We have not yet convinced AEP of the merits of our proposal. This application is a bit of a test run to determine where AEP are going with recreational trail management and I think they have yet to resolve some of the basic issues.

Bluff Mt. Surveys: We have identified Bluff Mt. as our priority for the next major area development – see draft Masterplan presentation. This area will need a comprehensive terrain survey before we can prepare a trail network plan. This is a large area offering many possibilities – we need to get it right.

Various

- Repairs to Roots O’ Hazard caused by water leakage from Pass Powderkeg’s snow making water lines.
- Connector Phase 2 repairs to trail tread damage caused by cattle and winter settlement.
- Repair/replace some of the wooden TTFs on School of Rock.
- Plus, the usual trail maintenance including being proactive on the removal of hazard trees and discouraging shortcutting.
- Some new signage to be installed.

Trails Masterplan

Our Trails Committee has been preparing a new trails masterplan for the Crowsnest area. (Andrew Fairhurst to provide a brief introduction). A lot has changed since the 2012 IMBA Canada Trails

Solutions Masterplan was completed. The trail specifics of that plan need a major update particularly in the context of AEP's request for recreational trail proposals from groups like ours.

Details will be available following the business portion of this AGM – primarily some large maps and a project list. Feel free to comment.

Next steps are to provide a draft to the municipality for their review and comments and shortly thereafter to pass on to AEP. This will be the start of a fairly lengthy process of Advisory Group and AEP review of our and other proposals. AEP will reconcile the various proposals and eventually prepare recommendations for the Minister of Environment.

Prior to submitting our proposal to AEP, we will be soliciting input from all Alberta based mountain biking clubs/associations with an interest in the SW corner of the province. The area we are to consider is 3,000 km² stretching from Waterton national Park to Kananaskis Country and this is beyond what we can meaningfully address. Ultimately, AEP will be looking for groups to partner with for developing and maintaining recreational trails. It is not realistic to expect UROC to contribute much beyond advice for anything outside the narrow confines of the Pass.

Jim Lucas, Trail Coordinator
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