

## UROC 2020-21 Trails Coordinator's Report



### The Big Picture

It is worth restating that as a bike club, **we only work on projects authorized by the landowner or land manager**. For us, this mainly means working with the municipality or Alberta Environment and Parks (AEP) although we do have some authorized trails on private land. Over the years we have developed good working relations and completed some quality trail projects – but it is not simply a matter of having a good idea. There is a lot of work involved in getting project approvals in an increasingly regulated and busy environment.

Most significantly, since the establishment of the Livingstone Public Land Use Zone (PLUZ) in May 2018, we have had limited success in moving forward with new trail on Public Lands. AEP would like from us our vision for mountain biking trails in Crowsnest Pass. This is now articulated in UROC's Masterplan which was provided to both AEP and the municipality in March 2020. Further, the Government of Alberta with AEP leading the process, are implementing a Recreation Management Plan (RMP) for the Livingstone and Porcupine Hills PLUZ which considers all forms of recreational use on public lands.

In 2019 the government established the Livingstone-Porcupine Hills Recreation Advisory Group to seek advice on implementing the RMP from stakeholders. In early 2020, the scope for the Advisory Group expanded to include the Castle region and Bob Creek-Black Creek and the group is now known as the Castle-Livingstone-Porcupine Hills Recreation Advisory Group.

See separate reports on the Masterplan and the work of the Advisory Group for more details.

The cumulative effect is that, for the club, new mountain biking trail development on public land is largely dependent on acceptance of our Masterplan by AEP which is in turn somewhat dependent on AEP's implementation of the RMP. Progress is being made but it is slow particularly when we can see what to us seem like quite modest proposals being delayed until the big picture is resolved. This can also be considered in the context of quarter sections being logged and coal exploration programs being conducted on the same landscape.

UROC continues to work with the municipality under a MCNP-UROC Trails Operating Agreement for trails on municipally owned and leased land and we receive Temporary Field Authorizations (TFAs) from AEP for new trail projects and for trail maintenance on recognized mountain biking trails in the PLUZ south of Highway 3. We see the working relationship with AEP evolving to a partnership model where multi-year work packages might be authorized. This could provide clearly defined expectations, more standardized operating procedures, more certainty for timely progress, and efficiencies both for AEP and UROC.

### 2020-21 Work

The **Connector**: In January 2020, we submitted to AEP a PLAR Application for the Pass Powderkeg to York Creek Area Connector, Phase 3. This project would have completed the Connector trail to Betanger Main (the main north-south permanent logging road through the area) with an additional 2 km of new singletrack trail – half through a treed area and half through a fairly recent cutblock. The new route would avoid the existing cutline, familiar to Sinister 7 participants, and also minimized the use of the

road which can get ugly when wet. Our idea for the Connector has evolved from the minimalist bikeable connection to something more ambitious and interesting. It would complement our proposed Star-Girardi Epic trail with a quality connection to the Pass Powderkeg trailhead.

We were unable to reach agreement with AEP primarily because it would have involved UROC reclaiming old industrial/resource trails in order to build new singletrack trail. While we can appreciate AEP's interest in reclaiming old linear footprint, we were not prepared to commit UROC to this. Reclaiming old trails is a big issue beyond the scope of the Connector and requirements need to be resolved between multiple government departments.

**New Trails and Reroutes:** In May we met with AEP staff to discuss plans for new trails and reroutes with a view to submitting a PLAR Application package. Under consideration were three projects:

1. Rumhead to York with a Fork Connector
2. Big Bear Down Reroute
3. Saddle Mountain West

Items 1 and 3 are included in UROC's Masterplan.

The Rumhead to York with a Fork Connection is intended to bypass the lower end of Rumhead running through the 2013 cutblock. The original trail was poorly routed and after harvesting it became further eroded and stands as a good example of how not to route trail. The new trail would have contoured around the hill, mostly through more recent cutblocks, and come out at the start of York with a Fork.

Big Bear Down is a single direction trail descending on the north side of the main Saddle Mt peak. The reroute would have replaced approximately 450 m of existing trail with a similar amount of new trail that would be more sustainable and provide a better user experience. The original trail was to be reclaimed. The re-route was surveyed and well defined.

Saddle Mountain West is a new 2.3 km trail and intended to be bi-directional. It would provide an option to make a loop using the lower half of Big Bear Down, Sooper Trooper and the track running along TC Energy's pipeline right-of-way. It would also provide an alternative when descending Big Bear to cut over to the Star Creek trails and parking area.

At our meeting, AEP indicated that no new trail would be approved until progress had been made on the bigger recreation management issues and that this restriction did not just apply to UROC. The Big Bear re-route was accepted in principle but no TFA materialized during 2020. We are expecting to get approval in 2021 for that.

And now for some success stories ...

#### **Ed Gregor Day:**

The get together and freebies did not happen this year because of Covid, nevertheless we managed to run four work groups:

- School of Rock – repair or dismantle old trail feature.
- Roots O'Hazard – short reroute past section eroded by a water leak; fix up a few features.
- Kids Corner – general cleanup of area and some light vegetation clearing.
- The Connector – fix some issues that developed over the winter.

It was a productive day with over 30 volunteers in action including quite a few young kids helping with Kids Corner cleanup. School of Rock structures looked much improved.

### **Kids Corner:**

From a project management perspective, this project broke new ground for UROC – direct dealings with our municipal council and residents’ consultations! This has been by no means a typical trail project.

The idea for Kids Corner (the name, a “working title” in movie terms, has now become official) was to provide accessible and easy trail for beginner riders, particularly youth. With its proximity to the Pass Powderkeg trailhead, Skills Park and Isabelle Sellon school playing fields, it was expected to work well for skills clinics.

The project morphed into a joint venture with the Crowsnest Museum/Heritage Society where they could display mining artifacts as part of their outreach program. The seed for this concept was probably that the location was associated with the Blairmore underground mine that operated until 1913. That the museum had some large equipment exhibit sitting along the west side of their main building was another factor. For us, this added another dimension – foundations, heavy lift equipment and pipeline crossings.

We have high-graded this project with superior trail features including a roller coaster and teeter-totter, drops, jumps and natural rock features. We have a densely packed network with 1.3 km of interesting trail which takes full advantage of the topography and varied vegetation. Altogether a great package in a small space.



We would like to take this opportunity to restate our thank to Teck, our main financial sponsor, for the \$40,000 that they contributed to this project. In addition, thanks for financial sponsorship from TC

Energy and donations in kind from Manitoulin Transport, PJB Crane, the Municipality, AEP, Summit Home Hardware, Rinaldi Welding and of course the big dipper from Komatsu.



Backcountry Trail Experts did a commendable job turning the plan into trails and we would also like to note the contributions of their time and professional skills by Victor Koch, John Redekopp, Duane Reimer and Dave Whitten.

For 2021, there is some outstanding work to wrap this up – signage, landscaping including tuning up berms, and some final clean up.

#### **Connector Maintenance:**

We took the opportunity while Backcountry Trail Experts were here to have them do some maintenance on the Connector by the first creek crossing. This area was recognized as problematic because of many seeps and unstable ground along both sides of the creek. Our approach has been to start with the basics and upgrade as required. This year, we added more ditches, rock armour and culverts as well as restored the trail tread. It remains to be seen how well this will work but hopefully, after a few more years, things will settle down.

#### **Miscellaneous:**

For several years we have had cattle incursions from the York Creek area – cattle have hiked along the Connector, Buck-50, 75-Cents and even the ski hill road. This was not good for freshly built trail and in 2019 we experienced the infamous pallet gate on Buck-50. This year we can report that the grazing allotment holder has fenced the east boundary of the allotment and installed a couple of bike-sized cattleguards. UROC contributed \$1,000 to the cost of the two cattleguards.

We continue to perform routine maintenance on York Creek area trails, primarily the removal of windfall/deadfall by our chainsaw certified volunteers. As is well known, unofficial work continues to take care of most of the development and maintenance in this area

Our trail traffic monitoring continued in 2020. The 2020 summer biking season has been heavily influenced by the restrictions associated with the Covid pandemic. Overall traffic has been up by 67% (based on average daily count) as people have increasingly turned to outdoor recreation when other options have been limited. The increase will have been offset by a somewhat later than usual pickup of traffic in Spring and the absence of the big trail-based events – Sinister 7, Sole Survivor and the Bikefest-Enduro.

Our logged volunteer trailwork hours were 921 for 2020. This is for fieldwork and does not include planning and other office type work. This is our second highest annual total.

### Looking Forward

Included in the Castle-Livingstone-Porcupine Hills Recreation Advisory Group's recommendations are the following:

1. Enable organizations (both motorized and non-motorized) to partner with the Crown to develop and maintain trail networks.
2. Continue the development of mountain bike trail systems in the Crowsnest Pass area as identified in the Castle Management Plan and Livingstone-Porcupine Hills Recreation Management Plan.

For the second recommendation, reference is made to ongoing work by UROC with AEP on a mountain biking trails masterplan.

We have received a respectable level of recognition for the work we have been doing and our general competence. We are at the table with a voice. As long as we can maintain our momentum, much is possible.

Personal Note: This is my last year as UROC's Trail Coordinator. After nine years in the role and with related responsibilities, enough is enough. Time to move on and make way for some fresh thinking and younger bodies. I have appreciated the confidence of the UROC board and enjoyed working with hundreds of volunteers, contractors, and government staff over that time. I have been a trail builder – sometimes at the expense of riding my bike – and it is a source of satisfaction to have helped create something of value for our community. Thanks for the opportunity.

Jim Lucas, Trails Coordinator  
Feb 21, 2021