

## **Three Valley Confluence DRAFT Trail Plan – Modifications Based on Public Feedback**

### **INTRODUCTION**

Public feedback on the Draft Three Valley Confluence Trail Plan was sought between December 4, 2008 and January 30, 2009. The public had multiple opportunities to become informed about the draft Trail Plan and provide feedback including:

- An Information Package and Comment form available on-line, at the Jasper Trails Project Office, and at the following public events
- An Information Session December 4, 2008
- A Feedback Workshop December 6, 2008

Feedback was received via e-mail to the Jasper Trails Project Manager and comment forms collected at the public events or mailed to the Jasper Trails Project.

All public feedback was reviewed, summarised and circulated to the Jasper Trails Project Working Group. The feedback was then discussed in detail over three Working Group meetings (January 19, February 2 & 9, 2009) and the recommendations in the Draft Three Valley Confluence Plan modified where appropriate.

This document is a record of how the Jasper Trails Project Working Group considered the public feedback and modified the Draft Three Valley Confluence Trail Plan.

### **WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?**

The Draft Three Valley Confluence Trail Plan has now been submitted to Jasper National Park for its consideration and approval. It is anticipated that the plan will be approved (with changes or in its entirety) by mid April 2009.

Upon approval, the Three Valley Confluence Trail Plan will undergo a Strategic Environmental Assessment and an Implementation Strategy will be developed.

## 1. TRAIL DESIGN

**What we heard:** Many individuals expressed concern that trail improvements will remove natural features/trail characteristics that many enjoy. While most users see the need for some trail improvements, there is concern that trails will lose valuable attributes if upgraded. There is a strong desire to maintain the rustic character of the trails.

**How it was addressed:** The Working Group felt that this concern was addressed through the development of different Trail Classifications. Some trails (trunk, primary) will receive a higher level of maintenance while others (secondary, wild route) will be maintained to a minimal standard.

Here are the proposed Trail Classifications:

- *Trunk Trails:* Our widest standard. **Trails that are more “manicured”** and cater to easier trail experiences. These trails are close to town and link to areas of high human use. Primary trailheads are located along these routes (e.g. Pyramid Trail, Wapiti Trail).
- *Primary Trails:* These are popular trails that receive higher levels of use. They tend to travel further away from town and provide critical links to the different trail regions in our network. These trails also support commercial horse operations (e.g. Maligne Canyon area, Trail 2b).
- *Secondary Trails:* Now we’re heading off the beaten track. These trails tend to have a narrower tread and bring trail users further from town (but not in all cases). They offer more variety in terrain and challenge (e.g. Saturday Night Loop- west portion). **Low maintenance requirement.**
- *Wild Routes:* Most of the wild routes you see on the map were previously unofficial trails or proposed new trails. These trails are characteristically narrower and provide the greatest degree of challenge. They offer both solitude and a unique trail experience. **Maintenance on these trails would be limited** (e.g. Razorback and Upper Ganges).

It was recommended that the **proposed trail classifications be further communicated** to the public. This may alleviate some of the concerns about maintaining the rustic character of trails.

**What we heard:** If we want to maintain lower use on the “Wild Routes”, the Working Group may want to consider picking a different name for the classification. “Wild Route” may draw more people out.

**How it was addressed:** The Working Group agreed.

It was suggested that this trail classification term be reconsidered prior to signage implementation. Any ideas?

## 2. DESIGNATION AND SEPARATION OF USE

**What we heard:** We don’t understand why mountain bikes are being designated.

**How it was addressed:** Mountain biking designation was a planning parameter within which the Jasper Trails Project had to operate. The Jasper Trails Project is not the avenue to pursue this policy change. Those that would like to discuss the matter are encouraged to attend the Park Management Plan Review Process:

*Wednesday, March 18<sup>th</sup>, 2009*

*5:30-9:30 pm*

*Jasper Activity Centre*

The Working Group considered mountain biking designation in the trail plan by proposing to maintain the multi-use character of the trail network. In other words, mountain biking will be **designated to the entire network** (with a few exceptions).

**What we heard:** Commercial horse use causes intense wear on our valley trails. The public had questions about how this would be dealt with in the plan, especially in areas where new trails are being built.

**How it was addressed:**

The Working Group proposed that commercial horse use be designated to a certain set of trails.

Appropriate signage will inform other trail users of commercial horse use in the area. This will provide further awareness of trail use in the designated area and allow trail users to make informed decisions regarding trail choice.

**What we heard:** There should be more separation of use, particularly in the Trail 8 area (Riley, Mina Lake Loop). This area should be hiker only.

**How it was addressed:** As documented in the Three Valley Confluence Trail Network Guidelines, the Working Group agreed early in the project that they were designing a multi-use trail network. Generally speaking, the public consultation and the collaborative planning process confirmed that there is support for multi-use. Studies on visitor use (who make up 75% of trail users) have also indicated similar support:

- 2008 PhD study is looking at trail conflict in the Three Valley Confluence – preliminary results suggest that there is very little conflict.
- Trail User Conflict – Colleen Anderson’s study (2004) showed a very slight preference for designation of specific trails for specific types of users.

The Working Group suggested that trail conflict be dealt with through messaging, signage, communications, setting trail user expectation, and etiquette.

There were a few areas where the Working Group felt that separation of use would be necessary and beneficial. These include:

- The Mini-Overlander Loop, just west of the Maligne Range. This trail must be very carefully planned, as there are patches of rare wildflower species here. The narrow trail has little room for expansion and will not support bike or horse use. This loop should be designated for hikers only and posted with “Stay on the Trail” signs (similar to the Cavell Meadows Trail).
- The lower trail of Maligne Canyon, the face of Old Fort Point and the trail around Lake Annette are recommended as “hiker only” (as they are presently).
- The proposed trail plan will look at the Valley of the Five Lakes in its entirety. There are many trails, viewpoints and varying trail conditions in the area. Potential design plans for this region may include some separation of use in ways that continue to meet all trail users needs.

### 3. FEEDBACK BY REGION

#### WHISTLERS

**What we heard:** The trail plan should consider a trail through the Whistlers Campground area that connects with Trail 5 (Whistlers Mountain).

**How it was addressed:** Trails within Whistlers Campground were recommended in the Draft Trail Plan.

With respect to a trail connection between the campground and Trail 5, the Working Group considered the costs of trail building (steeper slopes and challenging terrain in area), the potential demand for such a trail and the wildlife corridor in the area. The Working Group recommended to:

Explore the feasibility of providing a trail that connects the Whistlers Campground to the base of Trail 5.

**What we heard:** Allow access to the trails already in existence that parallel the tramway road so as to provide trail access all the way up to the tramway from town. This would also allow a loop to be created.

**How it was addressed:**

Generally it was felt this had already been discussed and a new recommendation had been created to explore the feasibility of a trail that would connect Whistler's campground to Trail 5 (see above).

**What we heard:** Incorporate the trail along Highway 93 from the west end of town to Alpine Village.

**How it was addressed:**

This trail option was discussed early in the project and an alternate route was chosen – the Wapiti trail. The recommended trail along Sleepy Hollow Road provides a similar experience for trail users. Additional trails in this area are not needed.

**What we heard:** Formalise the Macleod Trail.

**How it was addressed:** This trail provides an option for trail users to travel to/from the Valley of the Five Lakes area, off the highway. The Working Group addressed the ecological goals of the project by removing this trail from the network, as it is located in a priority wildlife movement corridor.

The adoption of trails from the Valley of the Five Lakes, along the Athabasca River, have compensated for the loss of this trail connection.

### *MARMOT*

**What we heard:** Views were strongly polarized whether or not to include a trail(s) in this region as part of the Trail Plan. Of the supporters, there were several recommendations for a loop option in the area. It was also suggested that the trail extend down to meet Highway 93a instead of forcing trail users to travel on the road. Suggestions were to use existing unofficial trails to accommodate this request.

(\*This was an area where the project asked for further feedback. Parks Canada was not prepared to accept the Working Group recommendation to adopt RJ's trail without further public input.)

**How it was addressed:** There is concern over how the RJ's trail is used. Repeat shuttling of bicycles to the upper trailhead and one-way quick descents challenge the boundaries of appropriate trail use in a National Park. There are also safety implications for others who might want to use the trail.

The Marmot area is not located in a priority wildlife corridor however the region is frequented by grizzly bears as they travel between sub-alpine and montane regions of the valley. The Working Group changed the recommendation in this area to:

Provide a loop trail in the Marmot area by formalising RJs and the Old Bus Road.

**What we heard:** We would like to see the Boneyard Trail added into this region.

**How it was addressed:** The Working Group agreed that they had already given considerable discussion to this area. Due to the ecological value and type/extent of use in the area, Parks Canada will be looking very closely at this region.

There will be no additional recommendation to the draft Trail Plan.

### *PYRAMID BENCH NORTH*

**What we heard:** A loop off the bench is missing; put Tunnel Trail back in the plan to link Pyramid North to Lake Edith. Also, formalise the Bike Toss trail.

**How it was addressed:** There was considerable discussion by the Working Group around these trails during the planning phase of this project. The Tunnel Trail, along

with Bike Toss I and II, were all recommended for rehabilitation as part of meeting the ecological goals of the Jasper Trails Project. **Ecologically**, there is strong justification for these decisions. There are additional challenges with directing trail users across the CN railway at an un-marked crossing. From a **safety perspective**, Parks Canada will not adopt a trail that leads to a railway track at an unmarked location.

Addition of the Tunnel trail, Bike Toss I and II do not meet the ecological goals of the Jasper Trails Project.

**What we heard:** Request for further densification in the Trail 2 area.

**How it was addressed:** There was some discussion regarding the number of trails currently in the area, and how many of them had been recommended for adoption into the proposed trail plan. Several new trails have been recommended as well. The Working Group used trail examples from Whistler, B.C. where stacked-looped trail systems were very effective in relatively small areas. IMBA trail specialist, Mark Schmidt used some of these techniques when designing the Trail 2 area in 2007. The WG suggested that further densification could occur in this area by adopting existing unofficial trail(s), but this would require further exploration on the ground. The Working Group added a new recommendation:

Explore the feasibility of further densifying the trail network in the area surrounding Pyramid Stables by formalising some existing unofficial trails. Specifically consider developing another trail(s) in the area bounded by trail 2, 2b and 2e to create shorter loops.

### *PYRAMID BENCH SOUTH*

**What we heard:** Consider the addition of a trail from Saturday Night Lake to Caledonia Lake.

**How it was addressed:** This idea was given much discussion through the planning phase of the Jasper Trails Project. The Working Group felt that this suggestion was addressed with the addition of the Magic Ridge trail that connects Hibernia Lake with Trail 3. Further dissection of the Saturday Night Loop would not create additional recreational gain and would negatively impact the ecological values in the area.

Any further development in this area would be challenging due to terrain. No change to current trail plan.

## TOWNSITE AREA

**What we heard:** Develop spur trail from hotels in town to the Jasper Discovery Trail.

**How it was addressed:** This suggestion was well received by the Working Group. These short trails will give trail users better, safer options to access the Discovery Trail from hotels.

The Working Group recommended that the municipality build spur trail(s) from the Discovery Trail to hotels at the east end of town.

## 4. ECOLOGICAL INTEGRITY

Participants from feedback workshop and information sessions generally felt that the Draft Three Valley Confluence Trail Plan met the ecological goals of the Jasper Trails Project. However, several concerns were expressed during the comment period regarding trails and ecological condition.

**What we heard:** There should not be any new trail development in the Three Valley Confluence.

**How it was addressed:** One of the focuses of the Jasper Trails Project was to provide areas for wildlife to travel undisturbed through the valley. The Working Group approached this by concentrating trail use in areas of current high human use and reducing human use in priority wildlife corridors. The plan achieves this by proposing the rehabilitation of approximately 76% of trails in wildlife corridors. To compensate for the loss of recreational value, some new trails will be developed in areas of higher human use/lower ecological value.

Priority rehabilitation will take place behind Pyramid Lake, on the Whistlers Shoulder and along the Signal Bench.

**What we heard:** The proposed trail that runs between Big Horn Alley and Trail 2b (along the escarpment) to join up with trail 2h should not be allowed. This is valuable sheep habitat.

**How it was addressed:** As discussed above, this trail will be developed to compensate for some trail attributes lost in trail rehabilitation. The Working Group is aware that the proposed trail will border Bighorn sheep habitat and spring lambing areas. To alleviate disturbance, the Working Group recommended a seasonal closure during the lambing period.

The development of this trail also addresses separation of use. A trail along the escarpment will provide another option for hikers/bikers/private horses to use the trail 2 area without having to travel on Trail 2b (edge of the bench) where there is a significant amount of commercial horse traffic.

**What we heard:** Bighorn Alley trail should be relocated down to the pipeline beside the highway.

**How it was addressed:** This trail is part of the Easy Trails System. When it was first considered, the Working Group looked at an alignment adjacent to the highway and it was decided that this option did not provide a positive trail experience. The Easy Trails System went through the Environmental Assessment process prior to construction and there were no significant environmental affects to locating the trail in this area. There is already significant wildlife disturbance here with a major highway and railway.

**What we heard:** The Signal Trail should not be incorporated into the plan as it runs through a priority wildlife corridor.

**How it was addressed:** The Working Group has given a lot of thought and discussion to the Signal Trail. It was felt that this trail was important in order to meet trail users needs (mostly local needs) and create user buy-in/support for the overall trail plan. Given the unique characteristics of the trail, it was felt that the experience could not be duplicated elsewhere. There is a recommended seasonal closure on this trail.

## 5. COMMUNICATIONS AND SIGNAGE

**What we heard:** The need for further communication and updated signage was a consistent theme.

**How it was addressed:** The Three Valley Confluence Trail Plan has addressed this by proposing to:

- a. Design a sign plan and map system with trail user input.
- b. Provide information nodes (e.g. kiosks and/or regional trail maps and relevant information) at trailheads, parking lots, high day-use areas, and important junctions on the trail network. Ensure consistency in the type and style of information provided.
- c. Provide accurate and comprehensive trail information, including distances, degree of difficulty and geographic context.
- d. Incorporate signage indicating trail etiquette, trail classification and use

restrictions.

e. Where trail closures or restrictions are implemented, provide explanatory material.

## 6. OTHER FEEDBACK

**What we heard:** Several existing and proposed trails bring trail users to highways and roadways. Are there plans for crossings?

**How it was addressed:** Providing safe crossings at Highway 16 and Moberly Bridge, Highway 16 and Highway 93A, and Highway 93 and Whistlers Rd are key actions in the Three Valley Confluence Trail Plan.

Studies have been completed for these proposed crossings, with implementation of enhanced and activated highway crossings beginning this summer.

**What we heard:** Is there any way a footbridge could be constructed across the Athabasca River, from Pine Bungalows?

**How it was addressed:** What a unique idea- and the Working Group thought they covered it all! This input confirmed the importance of getting the public involved- there's always something that is overlooked.

In the front country, there are currently six bridges across the Maligne River, one across the Miette River, one across the Sunwapta River, and one across the Athabasca River at the falls.

Explore the feasibility of building a footbridge across the Athabasca River- connecting the Pine Bungalows area with Trail 7.

**What we heard:** Why not use infrastructure/Right of Ways (ROW) as Wild Routes (e.g. 6<sup>th</sup> bridge to Moberly Bridge)?

**How it was addressed:** In some cases, ROWs are acceptable locations for trail use while other ROW locations are not ideal for trails. Most ROWs are required to remain clear of vegetation overgrowth and therefore are obvious trail routes. The Working Group questioned whether we want to invite visitors/trail users onto our ROWs – what kind of trail experience does this provide?

The Working Group has adopted some ROWs as trails (i.e. Trail 2d). The feasibility of adopting additional ROWs as official trails will be explored further.