

Meeting Summary:

COLUMBIA BASIN TRAILS MEETING, JUNE 10–11,
FERNIE, BC



Introduction

The Columbia Basin Trails Meeting was held June 10 – 11, 2016 at Red Tree Lodge in Fernie, BC. The purpose of this meeting was to connect trails groups throughout the Basin and provide an opportunity for learning and collaboration. Representatives from 34 different trails groups in the region from the cycling, hiking, skiing, horseback riding and motorized communities attended this meeting.

A number of presentations and collaborative sessions were held on a range of topics. The Fernie Trails Alliance hosted a field trip for meeting participants to check out construction of the new Fairy Creek Pedestrian Bridge and nearby trail developments and improvements.

Summary of Major Themes

Key themes that came out of this meeting included:

1. Regional Collaboration

Regional collaboration was a theme that emerged strongly in the Think Wall and in collaborative working sessions. Meeting participants used words like “networking,” “cooperation,” “alliance,” “consistency,” and “exchange of information” when discussing collaborating at a regional level. The importance of engaging regionally was indicated often and many expressed that it was valuable to share ideas and information with groups undertaking similar work.

Coordination & Cooperation Amongst User Groups

Collaboration between trail user groups was also a theme that came out often in discussions and was expressed through comments on the Think Wall. A desire to get together both regionally and sub-regionally was expressed and coordination and cooperation between trail user groups was indicated as a goal for many, particularly around trails planning. Supporting this theme were comments such as “working together motorized and non-motorized,” “understanding other trails users’ needs,” “regional trails strategy and planning,” and “local collaboration of user groups.”

Regional Marketing & Signage

There were a number of ideas on the Think Wall that drew on the theme of regional collaboration to include regional marketing. Included in these ideas were phrases like “destination development,” “promotion of the best our communities can offer,” “international marketing” and “development of a network of EPIC trails in the Columbia Basin.” Signage was tied into this theme as well as many indicated that signage played an important role in reducing risks for visitors and ensuring they have a fun, safe experience on Basin trails. Signage was also recognized as an important component of promoting the region through the development of consistent regional signage.

2. Resource Sharing

There was a great exchange of information happening over the two day meeting and many expressed the desire for this open exchange of information to continue. Some of the tips, tricks and resources that you shared included:

- **GIS Mapping:**
 - Esri was listed as a resource for non-profit groups and it was highlighted that for \$100 groups could take advantage of GIS support. To check this out, click [here](#).
 - Panoramio was also listed as a GIS resource with capabilities to export data to excel. To check out this resource, click [here](#).
 - Another participant referenced Avenza PDF maps mobile app, to check out whether this resource might be a fit for your group, click [here](#).
 - The Trust may also be able to support groups with GIS mapping (see page 3).
- **Tech Soup:** This website was referenced as a hub of support for non-profits, including access to inexpensive GIS readers and accounting software. Click [here](#) to check out the site!

- **Trail Forks:** We looked at this website in the mapping presentation. To check out the site, app or upload your trails data, click [here](#).
- **Non-Profit Advisors Program:** This Trust program can provide you with information resources. It can also connect you with an advisor who will assess your organization and provide recommendations. These services are free. For more information, check out this [page](#) or connect with Keri Rinehart at nonprofit@cbt.org or by phone at 1.800.505.8998.
- **Insurance:** Appropriate plans may vary depending on the group, but many groups talked about having general liability insurance of either \$2 million or \$5 million liability. Insurance companies that groups referenced included Capri and Oasis.

A number of participants expressed an interest in sharing resources between trails groups. Ideas that came out on the Think Wall for potential resource-sharing included “group insurance,” “templates,” “traffic counters for loan so that clubs can get data on # of trail users.”

3. Opportunities & Challenges

In discussions with groups and on the Think Wall, many participants identified some of their key challenges and opportunities and outlined areas where they would like more support. Within these opportunities and challenges, the following themes were mentioned most frequently:

Asset Management

There was a desire from many at this meeting to undertake an inventory of their trails and prioritize asset management as part of their groups activities. Asset management showed up as a topic groups wanted to see again at future sessions and groups also mentioned support in this area for “customizable asset management software,” “asset mapping,” and “dedicated long term funding for asset management.” Volunteers were noted as the greatest asset by many groups. The Trust has identified asset management as an area it may be able to support trails groups in the Basin through the development of asset management templates. More information on this opportunity will follow.

Operational and Administrative Funding & Volunteer Fatigue

One comment left on the think wall captured an idea that was repeated by many at this meeting that read “most nonprofit groups suffer from STP (Same Ten People).” There was a desire from many groups to secure funding for a paid administrator or trails manager so that they wouldn’t have to rely solely on volunteers. We heard many echoing this idea with comments like “money for paid administrators to organize volunteers” and “funding stream for ongoing admin and trail maintenance (cover labour costs).”

GIS Mapping

GIS mapping was identified as a way the Trust could support trails groups and something that appeared often on the Think Wall as a challenge and opportunity for trails work. The Trust is currently exploring whether we may be able to provide support through the Selkirk Geospatial Research Centre, more information on this opportunity will follow.

4. Future Meetings

We received a lot of feedback both on the Think Wall, in our closing collaborative discussion and on the evaluation forms that you filled out on the importance of continuing to bring trails groups together. There was a lot of support for a similar regional conference held in a year's time and some discussion on sub-regional meetings or round-tables.

In your feedback, many topics for future sessions were generated, including:

- Event Planning
- Data Collection (user data)
- Free/Accessible Technology
- Asset Mapping
- Local & Regional Trail Planning
- Business Planning

There was some desire expressed to open future meetings up to other stakeholders including Local Government and Destination Marketing Organizations and it was noted that the next meeting should include more content specific to motorized users.

Next Steps

- An FTP site with resources from the meeting has been created and can be accessed by clicking this [link](#) and entering the following log-in information:
 - a. Username: ftpspecint
 - b. Password: Special
- The following resources were requested at this meeting and can be found on this site:
 - A contact list including all meeting participants;
 - Copies of each of the meeting slides and supporting material that was presented at this meeting;
 - A sample copy of a Private Land Use Agreement provided by the Fernie Trails Alliance;
 - A sample copy of Asset Management tools used by the Kootenay Columbia Trails Society;
 - Copies of the resources included on the USB key:
 - examples of trails master plans,
 - the Provincial Recreation Strategy, and
 - funding guidelines for Recreation Infrastructure Grants, Canada 150 and the Rural Dividends Program;
 - And more!
- The Trust is currently reviewing our partnership with Selkirk College and determining whether the Selkirk Geospatial Research Centre could provide GIS support to trails groups. More information on this will follow.
- The Trust is currently exploring ways we can support trails groups with asset management. More information and/or related resources and templates will follow.
- A third Columbia Basin Trails Meeting will be held in 2017 to continue relationship building and collaboration and provide more opportunities for training on specific topics.

Thank You!

Thank you to all of you who participated in this meeting and shared your ideas, input and experience with us and other trails groups in the region. We're looking forward to getting together again soon!