

Written By: Trails Director P. Mullins with board members J. Burbee & J. Huybers, the GM, TM, and TC
Approved By: CNSC Board of Directors
Revised/Reviewed:
References: None

Rationale for a Trail Building Policy

Presently the club has a Project Approval and Management Policy but many trail projects (Nordic and singletrack) that might be of significant interest to members can remain ‘invisible’ to that policy or not trigger its reporting/notification function depending on budgetary impact (i.e. if work is donated by another agency, or done by volunteer). The project policy also depends on an interpretation of “significant physical alteration,” and only requires reporting to the board. Nevertheless, the projects policy covers financial elements and reporting on board-approved projects. The Trails Committee comprises diverse and knowledgeable members (as described in the spirit and content of the terms of reference), and as such its purpose is to “represent the membership in support of the Director of Trails and the Trails Manager in the planning, development, and management of trail systems to meet club goals” (see Trails Committee Terms of Reference, June 2021). This committee, therefore, can play crucial roles in providing and gaining feedback as well as engaging with members on potential trail development issues and activities as needed.

While Nordic trail building may have always been assumed to fall under the board’s responsibility as a core function/purpose of the club, that responsibility has gone unstated except in the project policy as related to finance. Singletrack trails have been built by amazing volunteers and provide a very significant year-round benefit to members and the community. Nevertheless, singletrack trails were built without coordination or planning of the various trail networks, and their management and maintenance becomes a club responsibility. Building new ski trails and an expanded tenure for the club, as well as increasing use and development of singletrack trails presents both opportunities and challenges for CNSC governance and trail management at Otway.

This trail building policy ‘connects the dots’ between the policy on project approval and management, and the role of the Trails Committee with regards to member engagement. Trail plans and projects can always be further informed by initial and additional member or public engagement, and/or by consulting with knowledgeable people and professionals with needed expertise or knowledge.

4.8 TRAIL BUILDING

CNSC's extensive network of Nordic trails and singletrack trails are heavily used summer and winter for a variety of non-motorized recreation activities. Approximately 100 kilometers of trail are spread over 400 hectares of land, resulting in many places where trail types intersect. Built to enable different recreational activities and diverse experiences, all trails use and are constrained by the unique topography at Otway. Favourable terrain for ski trails may also be favorable for snowshoe, hiking, running, cycling, and dog walking trails. Some terrain or trail designs are not suitable for the kind of experiences CNSC is dedicated to providing, or for which we hold insurance (e.g. downhill mountain biking, and technical trail features or TTFs). Multiple trail types and uses can result in conflict among users as well as conflicting trail designs and layouts. Care is also required to ensure trails are built to last, be reasonably safe, and to minimize negative environmental impacts that come with poor design. This reality challenges the board of directors and management staff who are responsible for optimal and strategic facility planning and development, safety, maintenance, and, ultimately, user enjoyment.

Recognizing that:

- CNSC, through the board of directors, holds responsibility to manage lands according to agreements with private landholders and with the Provincial Ministry of Forests.
- Environmental and trail-related legislation and regulations must be followed; and that ministry staff are helpful in determining implications for projects and courses of action.
- CNSC works with various partners and stakeholders towards multiple uses and ends focused on delivering optimal and diverse recreation and sport experience aligned with the values and objectives of the club.
- CNSC regularly has to adjust trails and/or the network in response to events or circumstances that are difficult to predict (e.g. expansion of mining impacting dog trails), or which arise over time (e.g. crowding, or use patterns).
- CNSC Staff and volunteers have limited capacity; member and public engagement needs to be balanced with timely and responsive action.

We endeavour to integrate and manage the growth and maintenance of the trail networks at the Otway Nordic Centre through the following:

Planning & Approval

- All trail building at Otway requires prior approval by the board.
- Trail building is coordinated by the Trails Manager, Trails Director, and Trails Committee.
- The board (through the Trails Director and Trails Committee) is responsible for overall trail planning and for supporting the implementation of projects with the General Manager, Trails Manager, a Project Manager (see Project Approval and Management Policy section 3.2), and volunteers.
- As per the spirit and contents of its terms of reference (June, 2021), the Trails Committee comprises diverse and knowledgeable members, and as such its purpose is to “represent the membership in support of the Director of Trails and the Trails Manager in the planning, development, and management of trail systems to meet club goals.” The Trails Committee will respond and make recommendations to the Trails and/or General Manager and the board as well as share information with the board and with club members about trail-related issues, ideas, proposals, plans and projects.

- The Trails Committee, working with the board, will determine appropriate engagement with club members based on the scope and specifics of proposed work and/or projects. Member engagement could include (i) deliberation of the Trails Committee, (ii) posting and soliciting feedback from members, (iii) consultation with specific knowledgeable individuals or groups, (iv) a survey of members, or reference to survey results, and/or (v) opportunity for comment and/or input on specific proposals or plans.
- The trails committee, board, and management should consider and plan for any additional burden or easing that a new trail project would have on the club's current and future capacity to maintain and groom the trail networks.
- Upon review, the board may approve, modify or reject trail building plans or projects, and will communicate their decision and reasoning to proponents.
- All approved projects must adhere to the Project Approval and Management policy section 3.2.
- Approved plans and projects are, ideally, ready for when funding, volunteer or staff capacity become available. Plans and projects may be approved, but not immediately put into action.
- Upcoming trail building work and projects will be communicated to members via the website and/or newsletter, or by other reasonable means deemed appropriate or effective.

Guidelines

- Trails serve different purposes and need to respond to diverse conditions, priorities, and constraints. As useful guidelines for trail planning and when making building decisions, the trail path, design, and features should generally reflect and consider the following, which are not presented hierarchically:

User experience

- The club's stated values (e.g. sport for life, community, family, accessibility), and mission to be a world-class facility.
- Impacts on and additions to users' available recreational experiences at the club.
- Enabling enjoyable, aesthetic, and rewarding experiences for intended and additional user groups.
- User safety aligned with the norms of difficulty across the club's trail network, activities, and terrain.
- Navigation of and movement through the trail and trail system.

Management and design

- Functional benefits to the trail network(s) and possible alternatives.
- Maintenance and grooming accessibility, efficiency, and implications.
- Management issues arising or being addressed (e.g. unauthorized access, conflict with other users or trails, need for periodic or emergency vehicle access).
- Applicable and/or informative external standards and norms for trail building, design, competition, and sustainability (e.g. FIS Cross-country Homologation Manual, IMBA guidelines, Whistler Trail Standards, BC ministry trail infrastructure drawings).

Environment

- Trail density in the area and proximity of other trails.
- Long-term sustainability and usability of the trail in terms of erosion, use styles and/or activity trends, and multi-seasonality.
- Maximizing quality and consistency of environmental conditions (snowpack for Nordic trails, soil durability and water drainage/drying for singletrack trails).
- Minimizing negative environmental impact and supporting conservation by, among

other things:

- Timing when trail construction activities occur.
- Considering water flow, drainage, soil, and plant conditions.
- Allowing room and habitat for wildlife.
- Making use of occurring landscape features and vegetation patterns.
- Using inert or naturally occurring building materials, and/or building in ways that reduce the need for further disturbance.
- Mitigating and dissuading trail shortcutting, braiding, and proliferation.
- Replanting impacted areas or unused sites and trails.

Construction

- Singletrack trail building decisions and projects are also expected to adhere to the spirit, uses, IMBA guidelines, and external standards referred to in section 4.2 Summer Use, 'Policy for Trail Usage during the Snow Free Period'.
- CNSC requires staff and volunteers to wear and use appropriate personal protective equipment while working on trail building projects.
- Operators of heavy equipment should have training and experience with the machines, tasks, and terrain in which they are working.
- Trail construction crews and crew members must adhere to the practices for coordination and safety as well as maintenance activities outlined in the Trail Maintenance policy section 4.9, with particular attention to use of power saws and trail building equipment.
- Area users should be kept safe and/or away from trail building projects through signage and/or trail closures.
- We recognize that the sequence and specific timing of projects may be impacted by a number of factors, including that many—perhaps most—trails and sites are built by volunteers who are often dedicated to specific projects, as well as the cost- and time-efficient use of equipment and machinery.

4.9 TRAIL MAINTENANCE

Maintenance is an important consideration for Nordic trails as well as singletrack trails. The club depends on volunteers to help maintain our trails. Maintenance is needed to mitigate environmental damage, promote safety, and ensure the best recreational experiences for members and visitors. Trail maintenance includes, for example:

- Keeping signage current and usable.
- Felling and/or bucking and/or removing deadfall and/or dangerous trees.
- Clearing brush.
- Reclaiming unused or heavily impacted areas or soils, excluding use from an area.
- Planting trees, grass or other groundcover.
- Mowing rights of way.
- Removing forest litter from singletrack trail treads.
- Preventing or stopping erosion.
- Re-cutting or re-establishing trail treads.
- Ensuring proper drainage and water flow, ditching.
- Tree limbing and crown management.

Maintenance efforts may also include any other adjustments to trails needed to ensure they can be used easily, enjoyably, and safely. Singletrack trails may require alterations to stay in alignment with IMBA and Whistler trail standards, or other guidelines (see section 4.2 Summer Use, 'Policy for Trail Usage during the Snow Free Period'). Some Nordic trails may require

alterations to stay aligned with competition standards that the club follows, or to allow for better grooming or skiing. Maintenance of the trail networks may also necessitate deactivating or re-routing unused or unsanctioned trails or trail sections, and/or removing any features (e.g. technical trail features, TTFs) that do not align with CNSC norms, guidelines, and/or insurance.

The club employs a General Manager as well as a Trails Manager, but relies on volunteers who use the trails for most of our trail maintenance. Importantly, volunteers need to understand the work needed, trail maintenance etiquette, as well as safe practices and operation of equipment. Therefore:

Coordination and Safety

- Members of the club or public who wish to help maintain trails at Otway need to contact the General Manager or Trail Manager.
- Working with the General Manager, the Trails Manager will:
 - Schedule and coordinate trail maintenance work by staff and by volunteers
 - Maintain and keep a record of volunteers who participate in trail maintenance, along with their experience and expertise with different tools/equipment, to help facilitate volunteer work, safety, and recognition.
 - Ensure volunteers are familiar with trail maintenance and/or building practices and etiquette.
 - Ensure volunteers know how to use equipment safely and properly.

Maintenance Activities

- Volunteers may use club-owned equipment, and/or they may use their own equipment. Users are responsible for ensuring the equipment they use remains in good working order, and that it is used safely.
- Lost or damaged equipment belonging to CNSC should be promptly reported to the Trails Manager (i.e. by the end of the day or work session).
- CNSC requires staff and volunteers to wear and use appropriate personal protective equipment while working on trail maintenance projects.
- Area users should be kept safe and/or away from trail maintenance projects through signage and/or trail closures.
- Anyone using a power saw / chainsaw must:
 - Show proof of—and adhere to—Power Saw Operator (PSO) safety training suitable for their task/work. The General Manager or Trails Manager should keep records of this for risk management purposes, and so as to not repeatedly request proof from volunteers.
 - Sign-in/out with CNSC management using a safety checklist.
 - Ensure area users are protected through signage and trail closures.
- The General Manager and Trail Manager will monitor the club's overall capacity to maintain trails in good working order. Should limitations become apparent, managers should develop a response that might include increasing grooming and maintenance capacity, and/or adjusting or prioritizing maintenance schedules and efforts, or reducing active trails. Some such adjustments may require that managers coordinate with the board and gain board approval (e.g. capital investment, budgeting). Others responses may be operational in nature.
- Trails within the CNSC tenure that are not sanctioned by the club (i.e. unsanctioned trails) are not maintained or included in the club trail network for various reasons. If maintenance and/or alteration could bring an unsanctioned trail in line with club norms and guidelines, the board would need to approve this objective as well as a project to do the work

(depending on scope and cost), prior to sanctioning the trail. For such instances, the Trails Manager should work with the Trails Director and follow the trail building policy section 4.8.

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