



RSTBC Mountain Bike Trail Pilot Project

Project Overview and Frequently Asked Questions

Background

Recreation Sites and Trails BC (RSTBC), a branch of the Ministry of Forests, Lands, Natural Resource Operations, and Rural Development (FLNRORD), is the agency responsible for managing recreational trails on public land and works to accommodate the demand for recreational mountain biking within BC's network of recreational trails.

In 2019, RSTBC initiated a review of mountain bike trail management to identify opportunities to improve RSTBC management practices and the overarching framework for administering mountain bike trails managed and maintained by RSTBC and its partners.

RSTBC and FLNRORD staff, along with experts in risk management and public recreation completed the review. Based on the review findings, RSTBC has undertaken a comprehensive review and rewrite of key provincial policy, standards, and associated tools. The new operational tool kit includes a difficulty rating system and an associated trail inspection tool, as well as new signage standards including a signage creation tool.

RSTBC plans to pilot these tools on eight select mountain bike trail networks across the province. As part of the review of the tools, RSTBC is engaging key stakeholders from the mountain bike community including local governments, trail organizations, and trail layout design and construction professionals, as well as Indigenous communities.

The **RSTBC Mountain Bike Trail Pilot Project** provides an exciting opportunity for mountain bike organizations and stakeholders from the mountain bike community to help guide the future of mountain bike trail management in BC.

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

PROJECT OVERVIEW

Q. Why is RSTBC revising its mountain bike trail policy, standards, and tools?

A. Currently, mountain bike trail maintenance activities on RSTBC administered trails are directed by the [‘Authorizing Recreational Mountain Bike Trails on Provincial Crown Land, Operational Policy’](#) dated May 2013. The policy references the [Whistler Trail Standards](#) (2003), [Chapter 10 of the Forest Recreation Manual](#) (last updated in 2000) and the International Mountain Bike Association (IMBA) Trail Solutions Guide to Building Sweet Single Track (2004). Some of these documents are over 20 years old!

Mountain biking has changed significantly since the current policy and associated reference documents have been published. The number of mountain bike trails across the province has greatly increased, alongside a greater demand for more challenging trails and features. Although trail networks are expanding in almost all parts of the province, inconsistent difficulty ratings, inconsistencies between standards and standard practice (Whistler Trail Standards says no gap jumps and no double black trails), and varying signage are posing an increased risk to trail-users.

As such, RSTBC is rewriting its mountain bike trail policy, revising standards, and developing a suite of associated operational tools to modernize mountain bike trail management and evolve with the changing nature of mountain bike trail design and construction, as well as help improve risk management practices associated with recreational mountain bike trails.

Q. What operational tools are being developed?

A. The operational tool kit includes new difficulty rating standards and an associated trail inspection tool, as well as new signage standards including a signage creation tool.

Q. Why is a Pilot Project being undertaken?

A. Because we need your help! The Pilot Project is essential to help refine and test the mountain bike trail policy, standards, and associated tools. Pilot participants in eight selected locations (the pilot areas) will apply and test the new standards and tools to trails in networks they manage. The findings from the pilot areas as well as detailed feedback from stakeholders in the mountain bike community, will be used to revise and eventually finalize the standards and tools.

Q. What are the Pilot Project objectives?

The objectives of the Pilot Project are:

- To implement a revised approach to recreational mountain bike trail management at a representative number of RSTBC managed mountain bike trail networks.
- To engage with select pilot participants on the development and implementation of new standards and tools for recreational mountain bike trail management.
- To solicit detailed feedback on new standards and tools from pilot participants, as well as from stakeholders and experts in the province’s mountain bike community.

- Based on feedback received, evaluate the effectiveness of the new standards and tools in contributing to recreational mountain bike trail management, public safety, and overall rider experience, and refine new standards and tools as required.

Q. Where are the pilot areas and how were they selected?

A total of eight pilot areas were selected to represent a wide variety of mountain bike trail networks and locations across the province. The following factors were considered when selecting pilot areas: willingness and capacity of partnership agreement holders to participate in the pilot project; diversity of partnership agreement holders including size of the organization; diversity of trail systems including network size, number and types of trails, biogeoclimatic zone, shuttle or pedal-only access, proximity to major population centres or rural locations, trail systems planned from the outset or organically developed over time; and the capacity of RSTBC district staff to help manage the project.

The pilot areas:

RSTBC Region	Nearest Community	Network
South Interior East	Kelowna	Gillard
South Interior East	Canoe	Rubberhead
South Interior West	Williams Lake	Westsyde
South Interior West	Valemount	Valemount Bike Park
North	Smithers	Bluffs
North	Prince George	Pidherny
Coast	Whistler	Whistler Interpretive Forest
Coast	North Vancouver	Mt. Seymour

Q. What are the project phases and timelines?

A. The Pilot Project is being undertaken in three phases from July 1, 2021 to February 15, 2022.

Initiation (July 1, 2021 – September 20, 2021)

Throughout the initiation phase, the pilot project objectives, expectations, and reporting requirements will be communicated to pilot area participants. Participants will also be introduced to the revised policy, the updated standards, and the new operational tools. Training and support will be provided as required. Throughout this phase, communication materials as well as the draft policy, standards, and operational tools will be distributed to stakeholders for detailed review, and First Nations engagement will be initiated.

Implementation and Monitoring (September 20, 2021 – November 30, 2021)

The second phase will involve participating clubs applying the tools to trails for field testing. This will involve pilot roll-out in each pilot area including regular check-ins with pilot area participants.

Evaluation (November 30, 2021 – February 15, 2022)

The third phase will involve final reporting from pilot area participants, a review and evaluation of feedback against pilot objectives, as well as a review of comments from stakeholders and First Nations. At this phase, feedback will be incorporated into the policy, standards, and tools. The finalized tools and approved policy will be implemented across the RSTBC program soon after.

Q. Are stakeholders being engaged?

A. Of course! We recognize the wealth of knowledge and expertise held by stakeholders in the province's mountain bike community. We are engaging key stakeholders including local governments, trail organizations and groups, and trail layout, design, and construction professionals. Detailed feedback on the development and implementation of the new standards and tools from across the mountain bike community will help ensure that the revised standards accurately reflect the community's interests and experiences.

Q. Are First Nations being engaged?

A. Definitely. An important part of reconciliation is providing better opportunities for collaboration and engagement and recognizing First Nations as partners in the stewardship of recreation resources, including mountain bike trails. We are seeking feedback from First Nations to better understand how we can collaborate and improve mountain bike trail management on their territories. One such initiative involves plans to include territorial land acknowledgements in the new signage packages.

Q. What are the expected project outcomes?

As a result of this project, the following outcomes are expected:

- Modernization of recreational mountain bike trail management on RSTBC administered trails through changes to provincial policy, standards, and practices.
- Processes for constructing, marking, managing, and maintaining recreational mountain bike trails are consistent across RSTBC administered trails.
- A comprehensive trail difficulty rating matrix that better captures the breadth and scope of recreational mountain bike trails typically found on public lands and provide consistent ratings across the province.
- New tools which will result in provincially consistent feedback to RSTBC while reducing workload on partners to perform partnership agreement holder obligations.
- RSTBC staff, partners, stakeholders, and First Nations are engaged in the development and testing of new policy and operational tools for mountain bike trail maintenance activities.

Q. Where can I review the draft mountain bike trail policy and associated tools, and how can I provide feedback?

A. Thank you for your interest in the project! All project documents and tools, including feedback forms, are available in the introduction email that was sent to all pilot participants and stakeholders. To request additional copies of project documents, please email mtbpilot@gov.bc.ca

Q. I provided feedback, now what? What are the next steps?

A. Thank you for your feedback! All feedback is appreciated and will be incorporated into finalized documents and tools. Once the operational tool kit, including the new standards, is finalized and the revised mountain bike trail policy is approved, an implementation plan will be developed. The implementation plan will include timelines, communication plans, monitoring strategies, and any other aspects necessary to successfully implement the new mountain bike trail policy, standards, tools, and practices.

TRAIL DIFFICULTY RATINGS

Q. How does the new trail difficulty rating system differ from current standards?

A. The new trail difficulty rating matrix is intended to be more reflective of the evolved nature of mountain bike trail design and construction, as well as offer consistency to trail difficulty ratings across the province. While many trail specifications are consistent with those in the current standards, some key differences are present. For example, the new trail difficulty rating system defines an upper limit for double black diamond (expert) trails, allowing RSTBC to establish double black diamond-rated trails, and authorize construction and maintenance on double black diamond trails on public land.

Q. Our terrain does not lend itself to building less difficult trails, the trails in our area are generally more difficult than in other parts of the Province, and our ridership is only interested in the most challenging stuff. Is this an issue?

A. While it is feasible to build beginner or intermediate trails in any terrain found in BC, we understand that it sometimes requires (significantly) more effort. The scope of this project is not to dictate *what* trails are built but rather *how* trails are rated. The goal is to consistently represent what constitutes a certain degree of difficulty for mountain bike trail users across BC. To that end, there is nothing preventing a trail system from consisting of say 90% black diamond trails (most difficult). What we are moving away from is incorrectly and inconsistently rating the difficulty of trails based on opinion or a desire to represent more diverse trail opportunities within a specific network.

Q. What if we do not agree with a certain specification?

A. Let us know! Say for example you think the jump sizes are too small or too big for a specific rating please provide this information along with a recommended revision. This pilot is your opportunity to help us shape the new specifications.

Q. Are the illustrations in the difficulty rating system final?

A. No, far from it. They are draft illustrations meant to help convey the specifications of a specific criteria. Once we have received your feedback and finalized the specifications, we will work on finalizing the illustrations. This will include things like style, colour schemes, fonts, etc.



SIGNAGE STANDARDS

Q. What about all our existing signs which members of the community have either made and/or are part of the identity of our trails?

A. These are what we refer to as character signs and it is understood that these are often an iconic part of the trail experience / community. Be it a rubber chicken, rusty ol' pail or a beautiful routed and painted wooden sign, these are not identified as an issue and the intent of this project is not to remove them. However, where the sign incorrectly identifies the new difficulty, we will have to consider modifications / revisions.

Q. The online sign creation tool is missing something, what are we to do?

A. Great! Please let us know if there are any additional symbols that need to be added to the various libraries. We want to ensure that we are providing you with a multitude of scenarios to best represent required signage on the trails. If there are also sign formats that you would like to see added, or any additional information, please let us know.