

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



In 2020, the Regional District of Bulkley-Nechako (RDBN) established a vision for delivering outdoor recreation across the regional district and subsequently created a Parks and Trails Service Area and a Recreation Contribution Grant Service Area for Electoral Area G, the District of Houston, and the Village of Granisle, as well as three other service areas. This Parks and Trails Master Plan is the first step in implementing these services for Electoral Area G, providing a framework for investment over the next 10 years.

The Parks and Trails Master Plan (the Plan) was developed in five phases from June 2025 through June 2026. Initial phases focused on understanding the inventory of existing parks and trails provided by others and engaging with stakeholders and the public to understand values, gaps and challenges. This review showed a strong foundation of parks and trails provided by the District of Houston, Village of Granisle, BC Parks, and Recreation Sites and Trails BC. Community-led outdoor recreation organizations have championed substantial initiatives, such as the cross-country ski trail network at Morice Mountain and mountain biking at Mount Harry Davis, and continue to make significant contributions through community organizing, maintenance, fundraising, and expansion projects.

Across Electoral Area G, there are four-season trail networks for hiking, mountain biking, cross-country skiing, snowshoeing, and ORV riding, as well as park amenities that support camping and access to lakes and rivers for swimming, fishing, and boating. Camping and water-related activities like fishing and boating are most popular among those who participated. However, wildlife concerns, maintenance issues, and a lack of information were identified as barriers.

At the same time, several challenges and gaps emerged, including limited volunteer capacity, funding constraints, concerns about potential loss of access, and the complexity of the jurisdictional and regulatory landscape. Engagement results showed that community priorities included new trail connections, improved amenities, and better information and signage, and revealed opportunities to expand lake access, enhance existing trails and connections, and strengthen partnerships.

Combining the findings from the inventory and analysis, research on best practices, and community engagement, the Plan sets out an aspirational vision statement for parks and trails services and amenities over the next 10 years (2026-2036). The RDBN will contribute to parks and trails that build on community strengths, create safe connections, provide diverse and accessible recreation opportunities, celebrate the region's natural beauty, and support a diversified economy.

To help achieve the vision, a set of goals and recommendations was developed and is summarized on the following pages. The recommendations will be implemented incrementally as resources allow. Some initiatives will depend on external partnerships, regulatory approvals, and additional funding (i.e. grants). The Board's endorsement of the Master Plan indicates a preliminary agreement, without implying a financial commitment. The Board will make specific decisions regarding financial allocation as part of the financial planning process.

VISION STATEMENT

The RDBN's Parks and Trails Service for Electoral Area G (Houston/Granisle Rural) will:

- **Build on Community Strengths.** The RDBN seeks to build upon the strengths of the recreation services provided by others, including First Nations, and recreation organizations. These partnerships will create a cohesive and sustainable system that enhances the overall recreational experience for all.
- **Create Safe Connections.** The parks and trails system will support connections between residents and key recreation and community destinations, focusing on accessible and multi-use linkages.
- **Provide Diverse and Accessible Recreation Opportunities.** The parks and trails system will offer diverse and accessible recreation options for all ages and abilities that will lead to increased participation in outdoor activities, increased health and well-being for residents, and enhanced tourism capacity. This will be achieved by maintaining and improving existing infrastructure and creating new or expanded parks, trails, and amenities to address gaps.
- **Celebrate the Region's Natural Beauty and Unique Features.** The parks and trails system will facilitate access to unique natural features and important community destinations and will contribute to a sense of place that attracts residents and visitors to the region.
- **Support a Diversified Economy.** The parks and trails system in Electoral Area G will support a vibrant economy and expansion of tourism by developing high-quality outdoor recreation amenities that enhance quality of life and attract residents and visitors to the region.

GOALS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Four goals emerged to support the RDBN in achieving the vision for parks and trails. Each goal is linked to a set of action-oriented recommendations to enhance parks and trails in Electoral Area G across a 10-year period from 2026 to 2036.

- **Goal 1:** Establish tools and processes to support the delivery of the parks and trails service in Electoral Area G
- **Goal 2:** Strengthen partnerships and build community capacity
- **Goal 3:** Increase access to outdoor recreation
- **Goal 4:** Enhance the user experience at parks and trails

A summary of the recommendations is provided on the following pages. Partnerships with other levels of government, First Nations, and community organizations will be critical to successful implementation. More information about resources required, partnerships, and collaboration is provided in the full Implementation Plan section of this report.

The Regional District Board's endorsement of the Master Plan indicates a preliminary agreement, without implying a financial commitment. The Board will make specific decisions regarding financial allocation as part of the financial planning process.

RECOMMENDATIONS

	Recommendation	Priority
Goal 1: Establish tools and processes to support the delivery of the parks and trails service in Electoral Area G		
1.1	Continue to engage with other levels of government and community organizations to prioritize opportunities for the RDBN to provide parks and trails through partnerships, direct acquisition, and management.	High
1.2	Establish service levels and management plans for parks and trails, in line with the standards for other service areas.	High
1.3	Consider adding staff to support the implementation of parks and trails projects across the RDBN's four parks and trails service areas.	Medium
1.4	Continue to work with First Nations communities, other levels of government, and community groups to maintain and expand land use agreements for recreation and conservation and to address questions about the future use of recreation sites and provincial parks, specifically the Lamprey Creek Recreation Site which has been closed by the Province and where public access has been restricted due to First Nations use.	Medium
Goal 2: Strengthen Partnerships and Build Capacity		
2.1	Continue to engage and build relationships with First Nations, including for the protection and enhancement of cultural and ecological values.	High
2.2	Continue to implement the Recreation Contribution Grant Program that provides allocation of multi-year funding to recreation organizations.	High
2.3	Continue to increase awareness of the RDBN's capacity to support outdoor recreation organizations.	High
2.4	Facilitate collaboration between outdoor recreation groups who are actively engaged in maintaining parks and trails features within Electoral Area G.	High
Goal 3: Increase access to outdoor recreation		
3.1	Work with the Village of Granisle and partners to explore the development of a multi-use trail between Granisle and Topley Landing.	High

3.2	Work in partnership with the First Nations, BC Parks, RSTBC and the Houston Hikers to explore a potential canoe route in Old Man Lake Park.	Medium
3.3	Collaborate with BC Parks and RSTBC to establish a trail connection from Nadina Mountain Park to the Owen Lake recreation site.	Medium
3.4	Secure long-term access to recreation and tourism areas by working with the community to identify priority resource roads.	High
Goal 4: Enhance the user experience at parks and trails		
4.1	Follow accessibility standards, such as the Universal Design Guide by BC Parks, when establishing or upgrading trails.	Medium
4.2	Collaborate with the Houston Mountain Bike Association to establish a campground near the Mt. Harry Davis mountain biking trails.	Medium
4.3	Develop a naming policy for trails and look for opportunities to incorporate Indigenous stories and histories into interpretive signage along trails, where appropriate.	Medium
4.4	Support the Houston Hikers in the enhancement and promotion of high-use trails as day hiking destinations.	Medium
4.5	Support the Morice Mountain Nordic Ski Club and Houston Hikers in the maintenance and improvement of the abundant trails and amenities around Silverthorne Lake and the Morice Wilderness Area.	Medium
4.6	Work with RSTBC to identify priority sites for increased maintenance and management.	High
4.7	Update the RDBN's website to provide more information about outdoor recreation destinations, parks, trails, and campgrounds.	Medium
4.8	Explore opportunities to develop a trail along the route of the historic Dominion Telegraph Line that falls within Electoral Area G.	Low