

REGIONAL DISTRICT OF BULKLEY-NECHAKO

PARKS AND TRAILS MASTER PLAN

FOR ELECTORAL AREA C (Fort St. James Rural)



2026

The development of this plan was guided by input from the following individuals:

Regional District of Bulkley-Nechako Staff

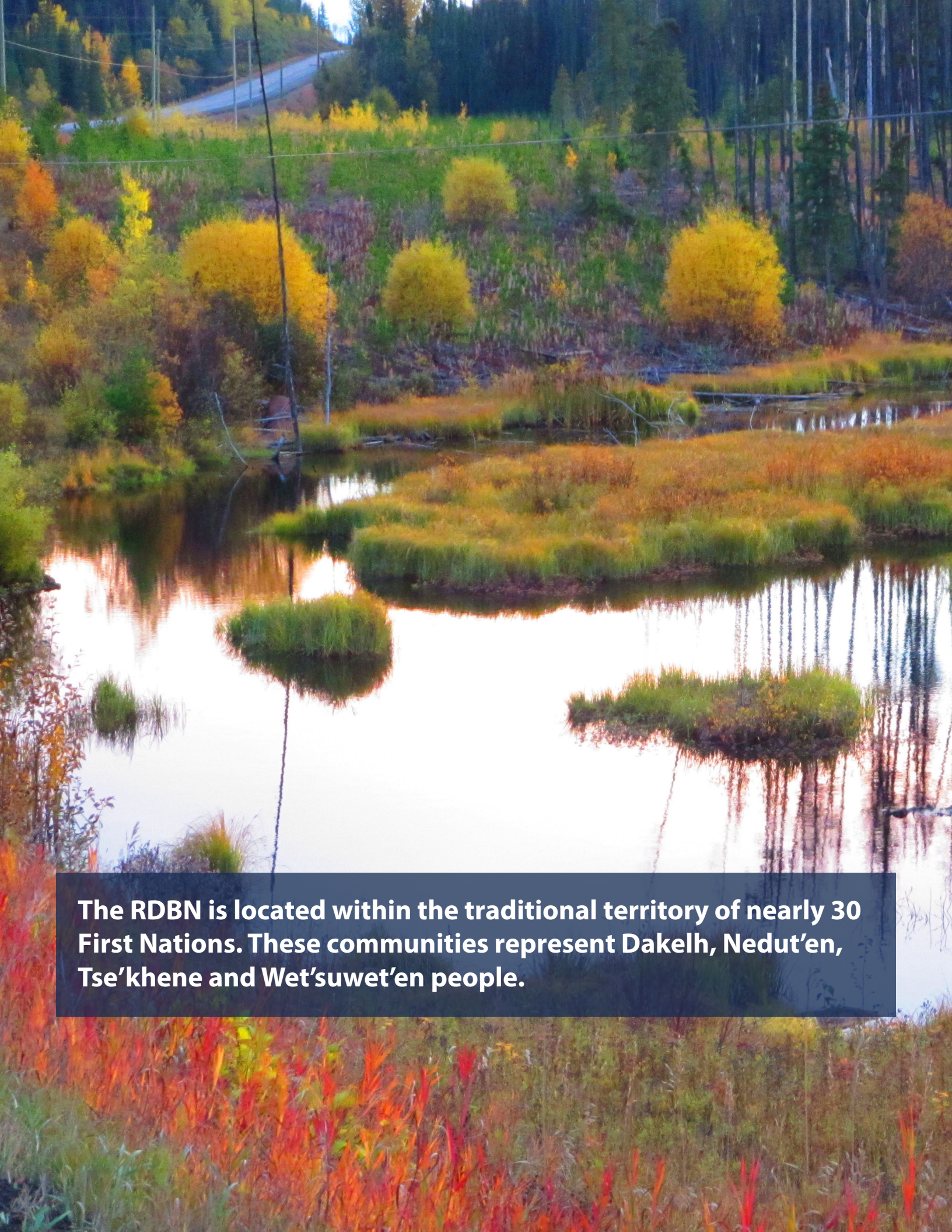
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Thank you to those residents, members of the public, and stakeholders who shared their thoughts and ideas through the engagement process.



The RDBN is located within the traditional territory of nearly 30 First Nations. These communities represent Dakelh, Nedut'en, Tse'khene and Wet'suwet'en people.

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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 C - Fort St. James Rural, as well as three other service areas. This Parks and Trails Master Plan is the first step in implementing these services for Electoral Area C, 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 Fort St. James, BC Parks, Recreation Sites and Trails BC, and community organizations.

Across Electoral Area C, there are four-season trail networks for hiking, 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. Electoral Area C has a rich history of First Nations and settler heritage values, including the Fort St. James National Historic Site and the grease trails that are part of historic trade routes connecting from the Pacific Ocean to the interior.

Community-led outdoor recreation organizations have championed substantial initiatives, such as the Murray Ridge Ski Hill, going strong for nearly 50 years; the cross-country ski trails managed by the Stuart Lake Nordic Society; and the many kilometres of ORV trails south of town managed by the Fort St. James Snowmobile Club. Though their volunteer base is small, these organizations have made significant contributions to outdoor recreation opportunities through community organizing, fundraising, maintenance, and expansion projects.

Swimming, going to the lake, camping, hiking, and winter activities were the most popular among participants in the community survey. However, poor maintenance and a lack of information were mentioned as limiting the use of existing parks and trails. 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.

Several challenges and gaps emerged, including limited volunteer capacity and challenges accessing funding and resources for ongoing maintenance and operations. There is unmet demand for safe and accessible walking and cycling connections, a need for better information about trails, and a growing concern around wildfire risks. One of the local trail networks used by the community for hiking and mountain biking, known as the Graveyard Trails, may not be secure in the long term without formalized planning and 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, and celebrate the region's natural beauty.

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

Over the next 10 years, the RDBN's Parks and Trails Service for Electoral Area C will:

- **Build on Community Strengths.** The RDBN seeks to build upon the strengths of the recreation services provided by others, including First Nations, BC Parks, Recreation Sites and Trails BC, and outdoor recreation organizations. These partnerships will create a cohesive and sustainable system that enhances the overall recreational experiences for all users.
- **Support the Creation of Safe Connections.** The parks and trails system in Electoral Area C will support connections between rural residents and Fort St. James, as well as connections to parks and key recreation 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, leading to increased participation in outdoor activities, improved health and well-being for residents, and

enhanced tourism capacity. This will be achieved by building and maintaining new infrastructure and creating new or expanded parks, trails, and amenities to address gaps.

- **Celebrate the Region’s Natural Beauty.** The parks and trails system will facilitate access to lakes, shorelines, unique natural areas, historic sites and trails, and important community destinations. The parks and trails system will protect and enhance the rich ecosystems of the region, preserving opportunities for wildlife viewing and appreciation of native flora and fauna for future generations.

GOALS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Five 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 C 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 C
- **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
- **Goal 5:** Support active transportation and a connected community

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.

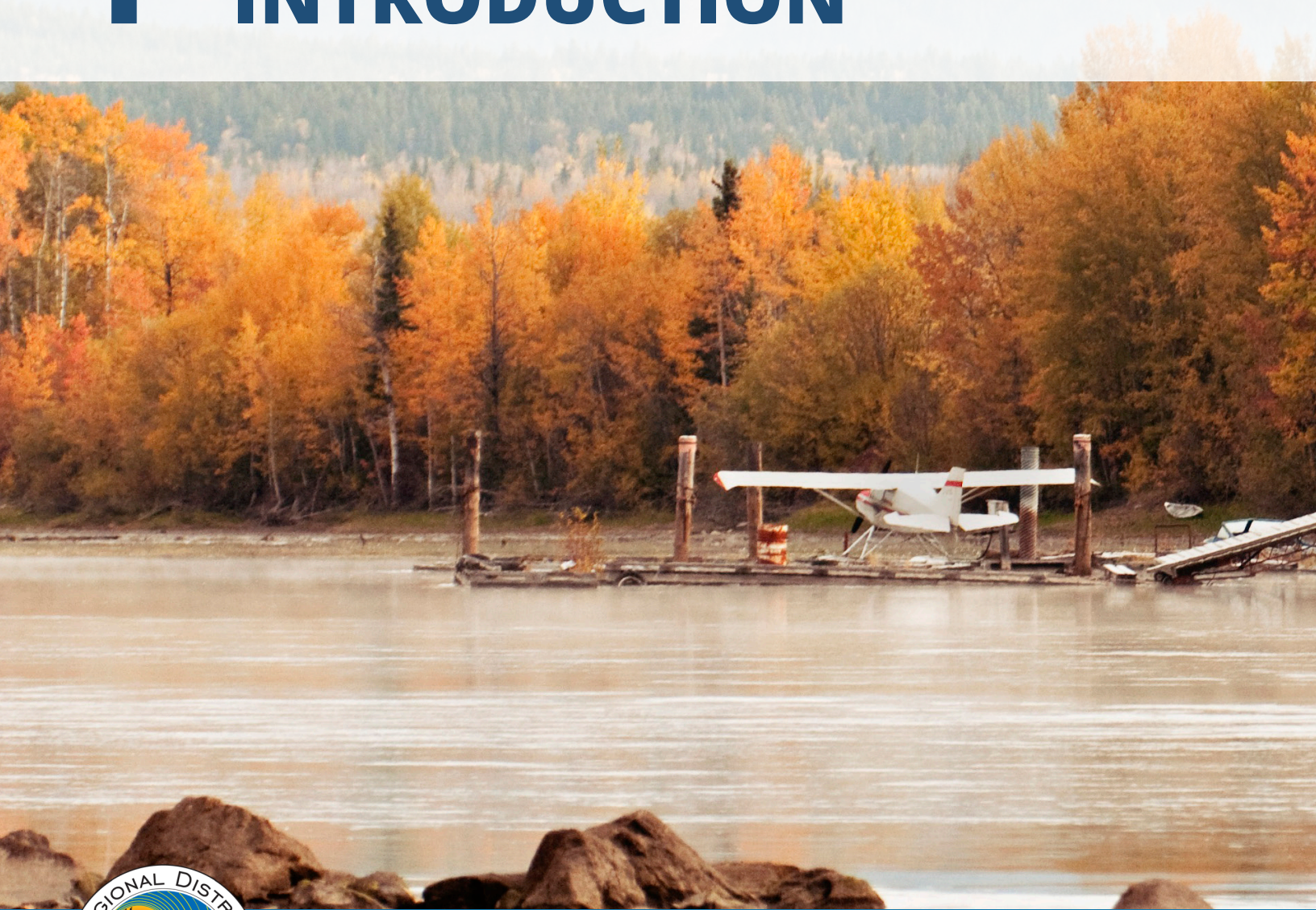
The Regional District Board’s endorsement of the Master Plan indicates a preliminary agreement, without implying a financial commitment. The Board will make specific decisions regarding financial allocation as part of the financial planning process.

	Recommendation	Priority
Goal 1: Establish tools and processes to support the delivery of the parks and trails service in Electoral Area C		
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.	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 actively engaged in maintaining parks and trails features within Electoral Area C.	High
Goal 3: Increase access to outdoor recreation		
3.1	Explore opportunities for the RDBN to support BC Parks in improving access to Mount Pope trails and improve key amenities.	Medium
3.2	Explore opportunities to improve year-round access to Stuart Lake along Stones Bay Road.	Medium
3.3	Explore the potential for developing a small, water-access rustic campsite with basic amenities and a natural shoreline boat landing on the north shore of Stuart Lake.	High
3.4	Explore opportunities to coordinate with the District of Fort St. James to further develop the Mount Dickenson Trail.	High
3.5	Support intergovernmental collaboration to formalize and improve the Graveyard Trails network.	Low

3.6	Explore opportunities to partner with First Nations communities, local recreation organizations, and tourism organizations to create a long-term, shared vision for the Grease Trail network.	Low
3.7	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 parks and trails.	Medium
4.2	Lead the development of a cohesive mapping and information system for trail networks in the region. Update the RDBN's website to provide more information about trails.	High
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 enhancements to the provincial RSTBC trails southwest of town, including those maintained by the Fort St. James Snowmobile Club.	High
4.5	Work with RSTBC to identify priority sites for increased maintenance and management.	Medium
Goal 5: Support active transportation and a connected community		
5.1	Advocate to the province to explore opportunities to connect communities and key recreation assets in Electoral Area C through the development of multi-use trails and pathways.	Dependent on proposed route

1 INTRODUCTION



1.1 PROJECT BACKGROUND

The RDBN encompasses the north-central region of British Columbia, with the majority of the Regional District's residents living in and around the communities along Highway 16, though settlements can be found across the region. The RDBN is home to 14 First Nations, with many others having identified Aboriginal rights or title. These nations have been stewards of the lands since time immemorial and continue to have significant cultural values and interests. The region includes rich agricultural lands, abundant rivers and lakes, as well as extensive forestry and mining opportunities that provide economic opportunities. Recreation opportunities, including fishing, hunting, and camping, are essential to enhancing both residents' and visitors' quality of life, while bolstering the local economy.

The RDBN's *Parks and Outdoor Recreation Study* (2020) identified the need for a regional parks and trails service to meet the growing demand for outdoor recreation in the region's rural areas and address gaps in the recreation services provided by volunteer clubs, municipalities, Recreation Sites & Trails BC, and BC Parks. In response to the 2020 study, the RDBN initiated the creation of four Parks and Trails Service Areas including Smithers and Electoral Area A, Houston, Granisle and Electoral Area G, Burns Lake and Electoral Area B and Electoral Area E, and Fort St. James and Electoral Area C. The RDBN has also established four Recreation Contribution Service Areas that provide financial assistance to organizations offering recreational activities for residents and visitors. To facilitate the implementation of these services, the Regional District is developing Parks and Trails Master Plans for each service area. This plan is the first for Electoral Area C (Fort St. James Rural).

1.1.1 PURPOSE OF THE PLAN

The Regional District of Bulkley-Nechako Electoral Area C Parks and Trails Master Plan builds on the progress made by municipalities, community groups, and other parks and trails managers in providing outdoor recreation experiences in Electoral Area C. The plan sets out a vision, goals, and specific recommendations to guide management of parks and trails in the region over the next 10 years.

1.1.2 PLANNING AREA

Dakelh, Nedut'en, and Tse'khene speaking peoples have resided upon the lands that include Electoral Area C since time immemorial. First Nations with reserve communities and Aboriginal rights or title in Electoral Area C include the Binche Whut'en, Nak'azdli Whut'en, Takla Nation, Tl'azt'en Nation, and Yekooche First Nations (Figure 1). The Stellat'en, Lheidli T'enneh, Saik'uz, McLeod Lake, Halfway River, West Moberly, Doig, Nadleh Whut'en, Tsay Keh Dene, and Lake Babine Nations have also identified Aboriginal rights or title in Electoral Area C.

The Parks and Trails Master Plan applies to Electoral Area C (Fort St. James Rural), located in the northeastern part of the RDBN. The area extends from Fort St. James and the Stuart River Valley in the southeast to the northern end of Takla Lake in the northwest. Electoral Area C surrounds the District of Fort St. James, the Electoral Area's only incorporated municipality and its main population centre. Most residents live in the Fort St. James area, with additional population in the First Nations communities of Binche and Yekooche on Stuart Lake, Takla on Takla Lake, and the unincorporated settlements of Germansen Landing and Manson Creek.

Similar to residents across the Bulkley-Nechako region, residents of Electoral Area C enjoy many opportunities for outdoor recreation in parks, trails, recreation sites, and Crown lands. The area's distance from Highway 16 contributes to its rural, independent lifestyle.

Electoral Area C has a population of 1,266 residents (2021). The area's numbers have decreased by 12% since 2016, similar to the decline in Fort St. James. The Electoral Area has a slightly higher proportion of seniors age 65 or older (22%) than the RDBN (18%) and British Columbia (20%). Electoral Area C has a similar proportion of youth aged 14 years or younger (13%) as British Columbia (14%), but a lower proportion than the RDBN (19%). Adjacent to Fort St. James is Nak'azdli's main reserve, Nak'azdli 1, which has a population of 528 residents. Youth make up 19% of the reserve's population, consistent with the RDBN average.

Roughly 18% of Electoral Area C residents reported some form of Indigenous identity. Only 35 residents identified as visible minorities, although the demographic is commonly underrepresented in census data.



Figure 1: First Nations communities in the Plan Area (Source: OCP 2024).



Figure 2: Electoral Area C Boundary.

1.2 THE PLANNING PROCESS

Phase 1 – Review of Relevant Background Materials

Phase 1 included background research, reviewing relevant regional strategies and bylaws, and mapping the existing inventory of parks and trails in the region.

Phase 2 - Community Engagement Round 1

Phase 2 included site visits, discussions with RDBN staff, and community engagement. This involved outreach to local First Nations, interviewing interest-holders, a public in-person pop-up event, and a public online survey. The sessions introduced the community to the project, asked about values and priorities, and identified challenges and opportunities regarding parks and trails in the region. Findings from engagement activities were summarized in a Draft Engagement Summary.

Phase 3 - Draft Parks and Trails Master Plan

Phase 3 involved developing the draft Parks and Trails Master Plan, including information gathered in the first two phases of the project and a draft vision, goals, and recommendations.

Phase 4 - Community Engagement Round 2

Phase 4 featured a second round of community engagement to report the draft Plan’s findings back to the community and collect feedback on the draft vision, goals, and recommendations. Round two of engagement included a second online survey and a virtual open house. Engagement findings from both rounds of engagement were summarized in a final engagement report, found in Appendix A.

Phase 5 - Final Parks and Trails Plan

Phase 5 of the project incorporated feedback from round 2 of community engagement into the draft plan to develop the final Parks and Trails Master Plan. The final Plan was presented to the Regional District’s Board of Directors.



Figure 3: The project timeline for the Parks and Trails Master Plan.

1.2.1 RELATED PLANS AND POLICIES

The Electoral Area C Parks and Trails Master Plan is informed by the following RDBN strategic documents.

Regional District of Bulkley-Nechako 2022-2026 Strategic Plan

The RDBN's Strategic Plan outlines the vision, mission, and priorities of the Regional District as it plans for future community growth between 2022 and 2026. The Plan outlines four strategic focus areas: relationships with First Nations, advocacy with the Province, housing supply, and community and economic sustainability.

Implications for the Parks and Trails Master Plan: Park and trail planning and development present opportunities to implement the Plan's recommendations for collaborating with First Nations on areas of mutual interest. They also serve as opportunities to act on the recommendation to provide services to First Nations communities. Additionally, outdoor recreation-based tourism could help advance the goal of economic diversification in Electoral Area C.

Regional District of Bulkley-Nechako Parks & Outdoor Recreation Study – 2020

This study was part of the groundwork that led to the development of the Parks and Trails Service. It reviewed community demand for outdoor recreation across the Regional District and surveyed outdoor recreation clubs that operate in the region. It also gives an overview of regional district park services across British Columbia and their service-delivery strategies. The study presents potential strategies for the RDBN to provide park and recreation services to residents in rural regions of the Regional District.

Implications for the Parks and Trails Master Plan: This study established the vision for delivering outdoor recreation in the region, where volunteer-based clubs continue to play a vital role in providing recreation experiences, backed by support and collaboration from the Regional District.

Fort St. James Rural Official Community Plan – 2024

The OCP identifies the values and aspirations of Electoral Area C's residents with respect to land use and development. It states objectives and policies to govern areas of different land-use designations and provides management guidelines for park and recreation lands.

Implications for the Parks and Trails Master Plan: The Fort St. James Rural OCP emphasizes the protection of areas having significant environmental or recreational value, and recommends developing a Parks & Trails Master Plan for Electoral Area C. The OCP supports the development of recreation access to lakes and rivers. The OCP also maps areas with potential for new parks and trails, and areas where development proponents should enhance recreation values.

Bulkley-Nechako Joint Accessibility Advisory Committee - Accessibility Plan – 2024

The Accessibility Plan identifies barriers that people living with accessibility concerns experience in the RDBN. The plan includes recommendations to promote a more accessible built environment, including in parks, trails, and outdoor public spaces.

Implications for the Parks and Trails Master Plan: The Accessibility Plan recommends the design or upgrading of recreation infrastructure to adhere to standards set out in the BC Parks Universal Design Guide Front-Country Parks.

RDBN Value of Tourism Report – 2017

The report identifies the value of tourism for communities across the RDBN in accordance with Tourism BC's Value of Tourism Model. The report summarizes the benefits of tourism in the RDBN and includes an estimate of tourism spending in the region. The report also contains a review of local planning documents related to tourism.

Implications for the Parks and Trails Master Plan: The Report contains no specific recommendations relevant for the Parks and Trails Master Plan, but its findings demonstrate that infrastructure is in place to allow the RDBN to benefit from tourism, which is often driven by outdoor recreation in the region.

District of Fort St. James Official Community Plan – 2010

This Plan includes a vision and strategies to guide land use and development in Fort St. James. The plan includes objectives and policies on parks, trails, and open spaces. This includes a classification system of municipal parks as well as acquisition/suitability criteria for future parks. The plan emphasizes supporting the development of regionally significant recreation amenities to benefit residents and promote tourism. The plan also includes objectives and policies to guide the development of active transportation infrastructure.

Implications for the Parks and Trails Master Plan: The OCP recommends a downtown and community revitalization project, including signage, appearance beautification, and developing the lakeshore/bringing the lake into the forefront. In addition, the OCP proposes developing walking, hiking, and biking trails with historical information and boardwalks at key locations. The OCP also recommends establishing related community infrastructure, such as a swimming pool, an arts centre, and a skateboard park.

Parks and Trails Service Establishment Bylaw No. 1930, 2020

A bylaw to establish a parks and trails service for Fort St. James and Electoral Area C.

Implications for this Plan: This bylaw authorizes the RDBN to establish, operate, and promote parks and trails, thereby supporting the implementation of recommendations in this Plan related to creating new parks and trails.

1.2.2 ROLE OF THE REGIONAL DISTRICT

The role of the Regional Parks and Trails Service is to establish, manage, and promote parks and trails, and by extension, support healthy and active living, foster community bonds through recreation, and enable individuals to enjoy the natural environment. The RDBN intends to complement and coordinate with the overall network of parks and trails in the region but not duplicate the services of other agencies in fulfilling its mandate. The general role of the park and trails system is to provide opportunities for the public to access and enjoy significant destinations for a range of year-round outdoor recreational activities including hiking, biking, walking, boating, paddling, fishing, wildlife viewing, picnicking, and swimming.

The RDBN implements a phased approach to developing parks and trails, focusing on providing access to day-use recreation areas, improving access to lakes and shorelines, and supporting the efforts of other government and community organizations to provide recreation services. Future phases of park and trail development are determined by the availability of resources, funding opportunities, and community priorities.

1.2.3 REGIONAL DISTRICT SERVICES

In addition to the Parks and Trails Service and Recreation Contribution Service, the RDBN does the following:

- **Grants in Aid:** The RDBN provides grants to community organizations through an application process which is reviewed by the RDBN's Board. Grants may be used for cultural, charitable, sporting, recreational, service activities, and special events benefiting the community.
- **Canada Community Building Fund:** The RDBN administers funding. Local non-profit organizations can apply for support on a variety of community projects, including outdoor recreation capital projects.
- **Transfers to Partner Municipalities for Recreation Services:** The RDBN may collect property taxes from rural residents to contribute to the costs municipalities incur for recreation services. The RDBN does currently contribute to the Fort St. James arena.
- **Grant Writing Support:** The RDBN has an economic development team with proposal writers on staff with the ability to help non-profit organizations with the grant writing process.¹

¹ Regional District of Bulkley-Nechako Parks & Outdoor Recreation Study – June 2020

2 CURRENT PARKS & TRAIL SYSTEM



2.1 THE PARKS AND TRAILS SYSTEM

Parks and trails play a crucial role in the region and are greatly appreciated by the community for providing recreational opportunities that enhance health and wellness. Parks and trails serve as avenues for accessing nature, provide opportunities for outdoor activities, and protect open spaces for the benefit of future generations.

The RDBN is known for its many lakes and fishing opportunities, as well as abundant recreation sites, camping, and trail networks, particularly for motorized recreation, that weave through working forests and crown lands.

2.1.1 REGIONAL PLANNING

The RDBN Parks and Trails Service is administered by the Regional District’s Planning Department. In each of the four service areas, planning staff are responsible for overseeing the development of the Parks and Trails Service, coordinating with provincial government and community recreation organizations, offering outdoor recreation services in the regional district, and administering capital projects and maintenance of parks and trails.

Each parks and trails service area has unique challenges and opportunities, as well as distinct outdoor recreation needs. A key challenge for the RDBN has been the question of how to balance resources and staff time between each service area. In 2025, 20% of staff time was dedicated to Fort St. James/Electoral Area C, with additional time allocated for 2025/2026 to develop and implement this plan. As parks and trails services in all areas grow, additional staff resources may be needed to address inequities.

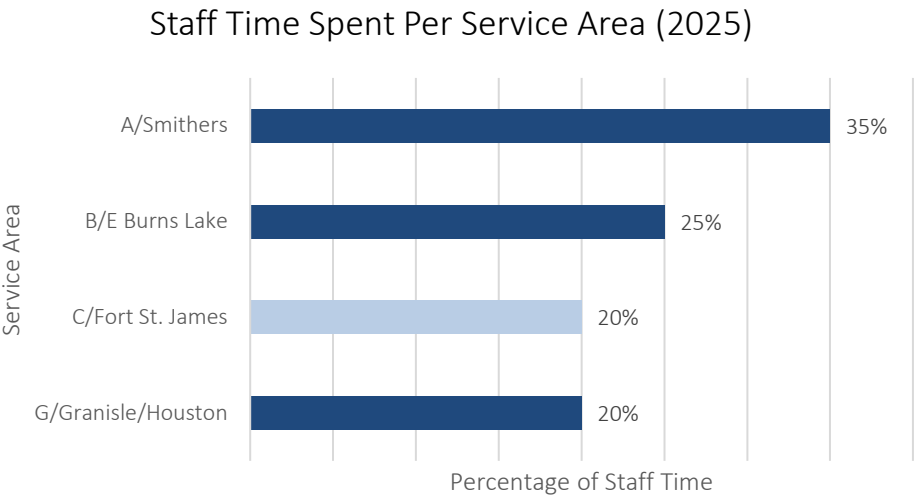


Figure 4: Percentage of Regional District staff time spent per service area in 2025.

2.1.2 PARKLAND ACQUISITION

The RDBN has the authority to establish and operate parks and recreation services as set out in *Part 10 of the Local Government Act*. The *Act* allows the RDBN to acquire land for parks and trails and pass regulatory bylaws with respect to managing those parks. With the RDBN's establishment of a parks function by bylaw, the following funding streams are the main sources of revenue:

- **Property Taxes:** Property taxes are the most common revenue stream to support the function of parks and recreation.
- **Canada Community Building Fund and other Senior Government Grants:** The RDBN has access to various government grant programs to fund parks and recreation infrastructure. Typically, programs do not provide funding for maintenance or operational costs.²

Although not currently in use or commonly available, the following additional tools can be used to generate revenue for parks and recreation services if opportunities arise:

- **Parkland or Cash-in-Lieu of Parkland at Time of Subdivision:** The *Act* gives the RDBN authority to require parkland dedication or cash in lieu of parkland dedication equivalent to the market value of 5% of the land at the time of subdivision.
- **Development Cost Charges (DCCs):** Through a Development Cost Charges (DCC) Bylaw, the RDBN may charge developers a fee at the time of development. DCCs for parks can be used to acquire land for specific improvements, including for new trails and picnic areas.
- **Ecological gifts, bequests, life-estates, and land donations:** The RDBN has the authority to accept ecological gifts of land which can be a considerable tax benefit to a donor to have a land donation recognized as having "ecological significance" by Revenue Canada.

In all service areas, there will be a separate **Parkland Reserve Fund**. Revenue collected in each service area will be used to cover the expenses for the capital, operational, and administrative aspects of the parks and trails service.

² Regional District of Bulkley-Nechako Parks & Outdoor Recreation Study – June 2020

2.1.3 OTHER OUTDOOR RECREATION SERVICE PROVIDERS

Various levels of government, contractors, and recreation organizations play a significant role in parks and recreation in the planning area. Outdoor recreation service providers include:

- **BC Parks** – BC Parks manages provincial lands including parks, protected areas, conservancies, and ecological reserves. Some land is undeveloped and designated as park lands, while other managed areas include camping, trails, and boat launches.
- **Parks Canada** – Parks Canada owns and operates the National Historic Site at Fort St. James. The site includes a collection of wooden buildings and interpretive features restored to the fur trade era, and staff host events during the summer months.
- **District of Fort St. James** – Fort St. James owns and manages municipal parks, trails, and sidewalks within the District boundaries, supporting community organizations and public users of parks and trails.
- **First Nations** – First Nations in the region are important partners and land stewards, with Aboriginal title and rights that inform the planning, management, and provision of parks, trails, and recreation opportunities on reserve lands and within their traditional territories.
- **Private Businesses** – Private businesses related to parks and trails include commercial campgrounds, marinas, shuttle and water taxi services, guiding and charter services, backcountry outfitters, lodging and restaurants. This plan focused on enhancing recreation that will complement these services, enhancing the overall economic opportunities for the Electoral Area.
- **Recreation Sites and Trails BC (RSTBC)** – In Area C, the RSTBC manages recreation sites and trails on backcountry Crown Land. The sites include various amenities including campgrounds, day use areas, and washrooms.
- **Recreation organizations** – Recreation organizations operate and maintain trails on Crown and community forest land. Organizations include the Fort St. James Snowmobile Club and the Stuart Lake Nordic Society.

2.2 PARKS AND TRAILS INVENTORY

The following section provides an inventory of parks and trails within the service area, focusing on those provided by other service providers as the RDBN does not currently own, manage, or operate parks and trails. A comprehensive inventory of parks and trails in Electoral Area C enables the RDBN to bridge existing gaps in the parks and trails system and identify opportunities to expand service offerings. A map of the parks and trails are provided in Appendix B. A full parks and trails inventory list can be found in Appendix C.

2.2.1 RDBN PARKS AND TRAILS IN ELECTORAL AREA C

The Regional District cooperates with other recreation service providers to support the delivery of parks and trails within the area. The main support mechanism is through the recreation contribution grant, which provides multi-year funding to outdoor recreation organizations. The 2024-2026 funding cycle included approved funding to support operational costs for organizations such as the Fort St. James Snowmobile Club and the Stuart Lake Nordic Society.

2.2.2 OTHER PARKS AND TRAILS SYSTEMS

District of Fort St. James

The District of Fort St. James owns and manages municipal parks, trails, and sidewalks within the District boundaries, supporting community organizations and public users of parks and trails. There are five (5) municipal parks, including a waterfront park and marina, municipal campground, splash park and sport fields, playground, and a plaza, highlighted in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Municipal parks and park amenities owned and managed by the District of Fort St. James.

Municipal park	Park amenities
Cottonwood Park & Cottonwood Marina	Beach; beach volleyball; washrooms; change rooms; band stand; covered picnic area; playground; small campground; boat launch; boat moorage; free Wi-Fi
Municipal Campground (within Cottonwood Park)	50 amp power at 4 waterfront sites; 30 amp power at Lakeshore Drive sites; water hook-ups; sani-stations
Goodwin Park	Playground; tennis courts; splash park; playing field; washroom; paved walking trail, basketball court, pickleball court
Rotary Kiddie Park	Dog park; picnic tables
Spirit Square Park	Plaza; war memorial; botanical garden; monument to Johan Pitka

Recreation Sites and Trails BC (RSTBC)

RSTBC, contractors, and partner recreation organizations, including the Fort St. James Snowmobile Club and Stuart Lake Nordic Society, are responsible for the operation and maintenance of recreation sites and trails on Crown and community forest lands. 26 RSTBC recreation sites and 586 kilometers of RSTBC trails are located in Electoral Area C, highlighted in Tables 2 and 3 below.

Table 2: RSTBC managed sites in RDBN C.

RSTBC Site Name
Ahdatay
Battleship Bay
Camp Lake
Camsell Lake
Chuchi Lake North
Chuchi Lake Point
Cripple (Nendatoo) Lake
Dem Lake
Dolphin Lake
Grassham Lake
Inzana Lake
Kalder Lake
Kloch Lake
Manson Lake
Philip Creek
Philip Lake South
Robinson Lake
Sakeniche Crossing
Sarah Point
Skunk Lake
Takatoot Lake
Tchentlo Hot Springs
Tezzeron Lake
Tsilcoh Falls
Whitefish Bay
Wolverine Lake

Table 3: RSTBC managed trails in RDBN C.

RSTBC Trail Name
Duzcho Grease Trail
Fort St. James Snowmobile Trail South
Fraser Lake-Stuart Lake Trail
Island Lake Trail
Kazcheck Falls Trail
Murray Ridge Trail
Shass Mountain Trail

BC Parks

BC Parks is responsible for the management of provincial lands including parks, protected areas, conservancies, and ecological reserves (Table 4). Most lands are undeveloped designated park lands that protect important habitats, lakes, and waterways. There are three main accessible parks with amenities that support outdoor recreation including:

- **Paarens Beach Park**, located 11 km from Fort St. James on the south side of Stuart Lake, is a full-service campground with 39 campsites and a day-use area. The park day use area includes a paved boat launch, a long beach along the lake, and a playground. Activities include boating, swimming, fishing, picnicking, and enjoying nature in a beautiful setting.
- **Sowchea Bay Park**, located 20km from Fort St. James on the south side of Stuart Lake, is a former forestry campground. The 30 small-vehicle campsites are rustic, with hand-pump water taps and pit toilets and half of the sites are lake-front. Lake access is via a single-lane gravel boat launch, and parking limitations limit day-use.
- **Mount Pope Park** is a highly valued park close to Fort St. James with a rock climbing area, caves, and hiking trails. A network of mountain biking trails traverse in and out of the parklands and adjacent private properties known as the **Graveyard Trails**, named such because they are an access point from Fort St. James and an adjacent cemetery.

Other scenic and ecologically rich BC Parks lands are remote and difficult to access. While there is potential for more outdoor recreation, there are no immediate plans for additional amenities. Two other BC Parks systems are worth noting due to their abundance of rivers and lakes including:

- **Nation Lakes Chain** offers a 120 kilometre route to canoeists through four spectacular lakes of Tsayta, Indata, Tchentlo, and Chuchi. The route was established in 2004 as a result of the Fort St. James Land and Resource Management Plan. There are four road locations for canoe access and eight backcountry, water-access provincial campgrounds. There are two commercial lodges, one on the south side of Tchentlo Lake and one on the east end of Chuchi Lake. A private work camp is located on the north end of Tsayta Lake.
- **Stuart-Trembleur-Takla Lake boating system**, has 630 kilometres of lakeshore with a series of small parks with protected anchorages and beaches, but no facilities.

Parks Canada – National Historic Site

Parks Canada owns and operates the Fort St. James National Historic Site located in the heart of the District of Fort St. James. The Fort is open during the summer months and has historic recreations of buildings and interpretive programs focused on the fur trade era of the late 1800's. The Fort is a significant tourist draw and offers open space, beachfront access on Stuart Lake, and a large dock.

Table 4: BC Parks and amenities in Electoral Area C.

BC Park	Park area	Front country camping	Boat launch (motorized)	Trail	Day use area
Mount Pope Park	2,037			✓	
Paarens Beach Park	50	✓	✓	✓	✓
Sowchea Bay Park	13	✓	✓	✓	✓
TOTAL Parkland	2,100				
Babine Lake Marine Park – Hook (Deep Bay) Site	179				
Babine Lake Marine Park – Sandpoint Site	55				
Mount Blanchet Park	24,774				
Mudzenchoot Park	644				
Nation Lakes Park	19,398				
Omineca Park	132,417				
Omineca Protected Area	1,773				
Rubyrock Lake Park	41,221				
Stuart Lake Marine Park	227				
Stuart Lake Park	343				
Stuart River Park	20,948				
Sutherland River Park	13,559				
Sutherland River Protected Area	4,835				
Takla Lake Ecological Reserve	240				
Takla Lake Marine Park	550				
Trembleur Lake Park	57				
Total (wilderness/unimproved)	261,220				

2.3 OUTDOOR RECREATION ACTIVITIES

The following section provides a snapshot of the outdoor recreation services provided in Electoral Area C to identify gaps and potential opportunities for the RDBN in the planning area. The section summarizes parks and outdoor recreation amenities and services in all four parks and trails service areas in the RDBN.

2.3.1 COMPARISON WITH OTHER PARKS AND TRAILS SERVICE AREAS

Gaining insights into the provision of parkland and outdoor recreation amenities in each of the RDBN's parks and trails service areas will empower the RDBN to make informed decisions about the specific services and amenities required in each area. Table 5 below provides the number of parks and recreation sites by service area managed by the RDBN, BC Parks, municipalities, and RSTBC.

Electoral Area C has the second-highest number of recreation sites compared to other service areas in the RDBN, however, sites are predominantly rustic with limited amenities, are user-maintained, and may be difficult to access. The supply of provincial parks in Area C is similar to other electoral areas. There are three popular provincial parks in the Fort St. James area, including Mount Pope, Paarens Beach, and Sowchea Bay Parks. Most remaining provincial parks are unimproved, backcountry, or water-access only.

Table 5: Number of RDBN parks, provincial parks, municipal parks, and recreation sites by service area.

Service Areas in the RDBN	RDBN Parks	Provincial Parks	Municipal Parks	Recreation Sites (RSTBC)
Village of Burns Lake and Electoral Area B, and Electoral Area E	2	10	13	35
Town of Smithers and Electoral Area A	2	3	21	21
District of Fort St. James and Electoral Area C	0 ³	9	7	26
District of Houston, Village of Granisle, and Electoral Area G	0 ³	11	19	21

³ As of 2026, RDBN Parks service in Electoral Area C and G is new and no parks have been established.

2.3.2 SUMMARY OF ELECTORAL AREA C OUTDOOR RECREATION OPPORTUNITIES

Table 6 below summarizes amenities provided by outdoor recreation service providers including government entities, land managers, and outdoor recreation organizations. Electoral Area C has abundant winter activities, including cross-country skiing, downhill skiing, and snowmobiling. Winter opportunities are managed and maintained by community recreation organizations and occur primarily on Crown lands authorized by RSTBC.

Warmer season activities include full-service and rustic camping, rock climbing, swimming and boating at Stuart Lake, and off-road vehicle (ORV) riding. Binche Whu'ten hold a popular annual fishing derby in the summer along Stuart Lake and operate a campsite along the lake between July and September. Mount Pope Provincial Park offers hiking opportunities, and Fort St. James provides walking paths. A few winter trails are also used in the summer for hiking and biking. While many recreation opportunities exist, main barriers include accessibility challenges, a lack of consistent maintenance, a declining volunteer base, and limited information and signage.

Table 6: Outdoor recreation activities by outdoor recreation service provider.

Outdoor Recreation Service Providers	Campgrounds	Walking/ Hiking / Biking Trails	Skiing / Snowshoeing Trails	ATV / Snowmobiling Trails	Beach Access/ Beaches	Boat Launches	Outdoor event space/ Fair Grounds
RDBN							
District of Fort St. James	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓
BC Parks	✓	✓			✓	✓	
RSTBC	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Community Recreation Organizations		✓	✓	✓			✓
Community Forest		✓		✓			✓
First Nations	✓						
Total Activities	4	5	2	3	3	2	3

2.4 PARKLAND NEEDS ASSESSMENT

The Parkland Needs Assessment identifies gaps and opportunities within the parks and trails system found during the planning process. A benchmarking exercise was also conducted, comparing the provision of parkland to other similar communities in BC.

Defining adequate supply of parkland depends on the values, desires, and needs of the community. Metrics commonly used to gauge the adequacy of parkland include a comparison across regions, assessing area of parkland per capita, and evaluating parkland distribution, and ease of access. The following section analyzes parkland per capita to understand inventory and distribution needs.

2.4.1 PARKLAND PER CAPITA ANALYSIS

Parkland area and population estimates were used to determine the amount of regional district parkland in Electoral Area C per 1,000 residents. Since the establishment of the Parks and Trails Service in 2020, the RDBN has acquired approximately 43.5 hectares of parkland, resulting in an average of 1.2 hectares of parkland per 1,000 residents. The RDBN has a below-average supply of parkland compared to similar regional districts. However, as the RDBN's Parks and Trails Service is newly established and anticipated to change the parkland provision over the next 10 years.

To meet the average parkland provision of 2.8 hectares/ 1,000 residents, an additional 62.16 hectares are required throughout the RDBN. **Proportionally, Electoral Area C would need three to four additional hectares to meet this target.**

Table 7: RDBN parkland supply compared to similar Regional Districts in BC.

Regional District	Population (2021)	Total Area of Regional Parks (ha)	Parkland (ha) per 1,000 people
Bulkley-Nechako	37,737	43.5	1.2
Thompson-Nicola	143,680	67	0.5
Peace River	61,532	72	1.2
Central Kootenay	62,509	86	1.4
East Kootenay	65,896	254	3.9
Fraser Fort-George	96,979	330	3.4
Central Okanagan	222,162	2,020	9.1
Average			2.8

3 COMMUNITY PROFILE



3.1 COMMUNITY PROFILE

The RDBN's regional context includes rich agricultural lands, rivers, and abundant lakes, as well as extensive resource lands providing economic opportunities through forestry and mining operations. Popular recreation opportunities with tourists include fishing, hunting and camping which diversify the economy and benefit people's well-being and quality of life. Electoral Area C is home to sizable provincial parks, primarily established to protect critical fish and ungulate habitat. The region sees short, mild summers and cold winters, with average daily temperatures below 0°C for five months of the year where snowfall averages more than 170 centimeters annually.

Developing a community profile for RDBN's Electoral Area C is an important step towards understanding the community's present and future needs for parks and recreation. As of 2021, the service area had a total population of 1,266 accounting for approximately 3.4% of the population of the Regional District of Bulkley-Nechako. The service area's primary population center is the District of Fort St. James. As of 2021, the District of Fort St. James had a total population of 1,386, accounting for approximately 3.7% of the population of the RDBN. Within Electoral Area C, an estimated 1,379 people live on reserve, comprising 3.7% of the total population, with Nak'azdli 1 as the largest reserve.

Although 2021 Statistics Canada Census data reports a decline in population between 2016 and 2021, the Regional District and District of Fort St. James note that the value may be inaccurate and believe the population is relatively unchanged.

Looking ahead, BC Stats reported the population is expected to remain stable over the next 20 years (BC Statistics). Most population growth is expected to occur among people age 45 years and older (Regional District of Bulkley Nechako).

Table 8: Population by area in the RDBN (Based on the 2021 Canadian census).

Community area in the RDBN	2021 Census population	Population Density (per km ²)	Percentage of census population within the RDBN
RDBN	37,737	0.5	100%
Electoral Area C	1,266	0.05	3.4%
District of Fort St. James	1,386	59.1	3.7%
Nak'azdli 1	528	170.9	1.4%
Yekooche 3	90	45.2	0.2%
North Takla Lake (Takla Lake FN)	243	248	0.6%
Tache 1 (Tl'azt'en Nation)	400	44.5	1.1%
Binche 2 (Tl'azt'en Nation)	118	25.5	0.3%

Population growth, age distribution, and household incomes are pivotal demographic factors shaping the recommendations in this Master Plan. The 2021 Statistics Canada Census Reports unveil key characteristics about the service areas presented below.

- **Average Age** - Electoral Area C has an average age of 46.1, slightly higher than the RDBN (41.1) and BC (43.1).
- **Household Income** - In 2020, the median after-tax annual household income in Electoral Area C was \$67,500, slightly less than British Columbia and RDBN (both at \$85,000).
- **Population of youth** - 13% of the population within Electoral Area C consists of youth aged 0-14, slightly less than BC (15%) and the RDBN (18.9%).

The parks and trail system will need to adapt to accommodate future populations of Electoral Area C and ensure a diversity of recreation opportunities are provided. A robust parks and trails system is important for attracting and retaining families, particularly within the context of maintaining a stable, yet aging population. Section six provides recommendations and actions to improve park and trail accessibility and the overall user experience.

3.2 COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

3.2.1 PURPOSE OF ENGAGEMENT

The volunteer community in Electoral Area C includes an extensive network of community organizations and sport/interest groups who are engaged in the provision of recreation opportunities. Understanding the community's vision and goals for local parks and recreation is critical to the success of the Parks and Trails Master Plan. Through two phases of community engagement, significant challenges, opportunities, and priorities were identified and guide recommendations.

3.2.2 FIRST NATIONS ENGAGEMENT

The RDBN invited fifteen First Nations with consultation areas in Electoral Area C to participate in individual rights holder meetings, as well as extending the invitation to participate in the public event and online surveys. There have been no requests for meetings to date.

The RDBN is committed to fostering robust relationships with local First Nations and acknowledges the significance of considering their interests and values. This includes protecting culturally significant areas within the parks system. All further input will be integrated into the decision-making process.

3.2.3 WHAT WE DID

The first round of community engagement, held in summer 2025, asked stakeholders, potential partners, and the public how they use parks and recreation facilities and programs within Electoral Area C. Feedback informed the vision and goals presented in the Draft Parks and Trails Master Plan and identified opportunities for the parks and trails system.

The second round of engagement, held in early 2026, shared the results from the first round of engagement and asked the community for feedback on draft vision, goals, and recommendations, informing the final Parks and Trails Master Plan.

3.2.4 WHO WE HEARD

Public consultation activities and participation numbers in both rounds of engagement included:

- 183 participants in two online surveys
- Nine (9) participants in community workshops
- Four (4) participants in a virtual open house
- One (1) in-person pop-up event at the Fort St. James Night Market

3.2.5 COMMUNITY VALUES

In the first round of engagement, the community was asked what recreation opportunities they value and how they currently use parks and trails within RDBN Electoral Area C. The following are key findings informing the Parks and Trails Master Plan. Further results from the first round of engagement can be found in Appendix A.

- **Trail use** – More than three quarters of respondents use trails at least on a weekly basis, most commonly for hiking, walking for exercise, or dog walking. Winter activities are also popular and for children, the most popular activities are hiking, ATV/snowmobiling, cycling, dog walking, and mountain biking.
- **Diverse recreation opportunities** – The most popular outdoor recreation activities were water-based including swimming and visiting lakes and beaches. Children most commonly went camping, swimming/going to the lake, and downhill skiing. Respondents also particularly valued camping, fishing, kayaking, and canoeing.
- **Barriers to park and trail access** – Roughly one-third of respondents do not face barriers to accessing parks and trails within the Service Area. Those who did most commonly listed barriers including poor maintenance, limited time, and a lack of information.
- **Key trail destinations** – Mount Pope was overwhelmingly the most commonly mentioned destination. Stuart River, Murray Ridge, and Sowchea Bay were also popular mentions.
- **Parks and trail planning priorities** – Respondents would like to see the RDBN prioritize the creation and management of a new trails network over the next ten years. They would also like to prioritize the creation of connections between communities and key destinations.
- **Recreation priorities** - They would also like to see more opportunities to be active, specifically hiking and walking as a main priority which could include improved trail signage identified as a priority.

3.2.6 KEY FINDINGS

Key themes were identified across engagement activities through both rounds of engagement, informing the vision, goals, and recommendations. The following challenges, opportunities, and priorities shared are provided in the following section.

Challenges

- **Volunteer capacity** – A small volunteer base, an aging group of volunteers, and informal maintenance practices limit regular maintenance, increase concerns with risk and liability, and minimize opportunities to secure trail access across private lands.
- **Safety on roads** - A lack of safe and accessible walking and cycling connections in and around Fort St. James trails is of particular concern along busy roadways.
- **Resource access** - Difficulties accessing resources from other levels of government outside of the RDBN and a lack of information limit ongoing trail maintenance.
- **Wildfire risk** - A growing risk of wildfire continues to place pressures on existing recreation areas.

Opportunities

- **Trail networks** - Formalizing and improving existing trail networks, particularly the Graveyard Trails and ensuring access as development occurs nearby.
- **Trail connections** - Establishing a continuous trail connection from Sowchea Bay Road to Fort St. James and onward to the Graveyard Trails and Mount Pope Provincial Park.
- **Winter access** - Providing additional winter trail access to expand cross-country skiing opportunities, especially closer to town.
- **Lake access** - Increasing access to lakes by improving boat launches and parking.
- **Accessible trails** - Improving trail accessibility, wayfinding, signage and comfort amenities across existing trails.
- **Funding** - Securing funding to support existing and new local recreation organizations.
- **New organizations** - Forming a hiking or biking organization.
- **Working group** - Establishing a Parks and Trails working group.

Priorities

- **Trail improvement** - Creating and managing new trails, including creating mountain biking trails and upgrading existing routes. This includes joining McLeod Lake and Nak'adzli to improve the Grease Trail.
- **Local First Nations** - Acknowledging and prioritizing local First Nations in the overall vision of the Parks and Trails Master Plan and ensuring their meaningful involvement in the establishment of a Parks and Trails working group.
- **Safe connections** - Developing safer connections between communities and key destinations.
- **Additional land** - Acquiring new land for regional parks to protect environmentally sensitive areas.
- **Recreation opportunities** - Expanding opportunities for year-round recreation and nature opportunities.
- **Recreation access** - Improving access to beaches, the Mount Pope trails, the T-caves climbing area, and year-round access to Stuart Lake along Stones Bay Road.
- **New amenities** - Adding supporting amenities including pit toilets, improved signage, and accessible trail upgrades, to support tourism opportunities.

4 BENEFITS & TRENDS



4.1 BENEFITS OF PARKS AND TRAILS

The following section presents benefits of parks and trails, including improvements to health and well-being, advancement in reconciliation, strengthening local ecosystems and the environment, and providing economic growth and tourism opportunities.

Health and well-being

Spending time in nature and participating in outdoor recreation reduces stress and promotes social connections. In 2023, the Outdoor Recreation Council of BC⁴ conducted a survey on outdoor recreation participation, emphasizing the importance across British Columbia. The survey highlighted the significance of outdoor recreation for creating positive social connections and preserving mental well-being during the winter in the RDBN. The Stuart Lake Nordic Society and Fort St. James Snowmobile Club are two examples of organizations that spend considerable time and energy to provide winter recreation opportunities in the community.



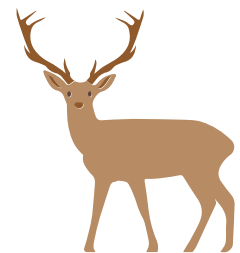
Reconciliation

There is an increasing imperative to understand the pre-colonial settlement history of British Columbia and to gain greater awareness and consideration of Indigenous cultures. Initiatives such as naming parks and trails in partnership with Indigenous communities and incorporating Indigenous stories and histories have become best practices. Engaging with First Nations communities and incorporating their values and needs in parks and trails is a very important step that land managers can take towards Reconciliation. Consideration is also needed when establishing parks or amenities to protect archaeological and other culturally important areas, and making sure access is maintained for hunting, fishing, gathering, and ceremony.



Environmental

According to the National Recreation and Parks Association (NRPA), parks and trails serve a vital role in conserving natural resources, providing wildlife habitat, safeguarding air and water quality, offsetting carbon emissions, and preserving open spaces for future generations. Engaging in stewardship and participating in volunteer activities within parks allows the public to actively contribute to protecting these spaces for the future while also increasing awareness of environmental issues at both local and global levels.



⁴ Lopez, X.D. (2023). The Impacts of Outdoor Recreation in Rural B.C. Communities. Outdoor Recreation Council of BC.

In the RDBN, parks can play a significant role in safeguarding essential ecosystems and natural features, such as rivers, lakes, spawning areas, and marshes. Moreover, they can serve as habitats for a diverse range of wildlife.

Tourism

This region's natural attractions are becoming increasingly popular with tourists seeking outdoor activities in rural areas. In particular, the area is known for the abundant lakes and rivers, offering boating and fishing opportunities. Camping and other recreation activities are promoted through various organizations and outlets, such as Destination BC, which could increase interest in parks and trails in the area. Tourism brings economic benefits by supporting outdoor recreation guides and outfitters, as well as restaurants, hotels, and other services. A cohesive set of information and resources on the wide variety of parks, trails, and outdoor recreation opportunities could include maps, brochures, and links to additional resources. Planning for variation in the tourism sector is also important, as tourism can be affected by wildfires and weather.



Economic

Parks and trails encourage people to get outside and move, contributing to long-term reductions in healthcare costs associated with the health burden of physical inactivity and associated chronic diseases. Research suggests that even a 10% increase in physical activity rates among Canadians could lead to a substantial \$150 million reduction in direct healthcare costs⁵.

Regional district parks and trails serve as attractive destinations for both visitors and residents. The infrastructure of these parks and trails provides opportunities to generate revenue through venue rentals, events, educational programs, and interpretive activities. A 2020 study reveals that outdoor recreation in British Columbia contributes over 15 billion dollars in economic value to the residents of the province each year⁶.



⁵ Katzmarzyk, P.T. *The economic burden of physical inactivity in Canada*. 2000, November 28. Canadian Medical Association Journal, pp. 163(11):1435-40.

⁶ Smith, Patrick Lloyd. *The Economic Benefits of Recreation in Canada*. 2020, August 25. Department of Agriculture and Resource Economics, University of Saskatchewan. <https://plloydsmith.github.io/files/LloydSmith_RecCJE.pdf>

4.2 TRENDS OF PARKS AND TRAILS

The following section examines key trends shaping parks and trails in Area C, including climate change, communication and wayfinding, recreation, accessibility, park use, and volunteer capacity.

Climate Change

Northern BC is experiencing the effects of climate change, including increased wildfire risk, extreme weather events, changes in snowfall and frost-free days, more severe rainfall events, and other impacts on residents' health and community infrastructure. Climate change will be top of mind for future park endeavours, including operational practices, maintenance considerations and park acquisition. On the flip side, parks can enhance climate resilience by serving as respite in hot weather, protecting important natural areas such as wetlands and lakeshores, and incorporating FireSmart principles to ensure community preparedness for wildfires.



Wayfinding

Communicating with park and trail users is an important component to creating a vibrant tourism sector, as well as making residents aware of the opportunities in the community. Wayfinding and interpretation make it easier to find and take advantage of the abundant opportunities, while also connecting people to place and telling the story of the area's natural and cultural values. Interpretive programs, signage, and wayfinding resources help park visitors learn about the area they are exploring, providing a more profound and meaningful experience beyond just being present in the space.



Recreation

Activities such as fishing, mountain biking, cycling for recreation, canoeing, horseback riding, motorized trail use, walking and hiking continue to increase in popularity – highlighting the importance of planning and managing for diverse use and potential conflicts associated with shared use of parks.

In Northern BC, both residents and visitors are increasingly drawn to wildlife viewing, with the Bulkley-Nechako area being recognized as one of the finest places to observe undisturbed wildlife in remote locations. Wildlife viewing offers a flexible, equipment-light activity suitable for all ages. However, educating park visitors is crucial to ensuring public safety during wildlife viewing and to effectively minimizing human-wildlife conflicts.



Accessibility

With an aging population in the planning area, a growing number of individuals will face mobility challenges precisely at a time when the significance of staying active and getting outdoors increases. In parks, the presence of safe, enjoyable options for seniors and those with limited mobility holds great appeal, as these amenities can be used by people of all ages, including parents with strollers and younger children. Trails that are safe and easily accessible play a crucial role in encouraging and empowering children and youth to engage in physical activity.



The issue of accessibility extends beyond the younger and older demographics. According to the Canadian Survey on Disability Report, in 2022, 27% of the Canadian population aged 15 and older had one or more disabilities, ranging from mild to severe⁷. That percentage is up from 22% in 2017. These disabilities pose challenges for the most vulnerable members of the community in accessing public facilities, including parks.

Year-Round Park Use

The Regional District of Bulkley-Nechako experiences winter weather conditions for nearly six months each year. Encouraging and embracing outdoor recreation during this period is essential to keep people active and engaged with parks throughout the entire year. By providing opportunities for these winter activities, parks can cater to a broader range of visitors and ensure that the enjoyment of outdoor spaces extends beyond the warmer months.



Volunteerism

A survey conducted in 2023 for the Outdoor Recreation Council of BC⁸ emphasized volunteer retention can be challenging, with factors such as burnout and aging demographics contributing to this issue. Outdoor recreation clubs expressed that the burden of work falls on the same few volunteers consistently. The combination of an aging volunteer base and a relatively small population presents further difficulties in effectively addressing these maintenance needs. There is a need for strategies to build community capacity and increase sharing and collaboration among organizations.



⁷ Statistics Canada. *A demographic, employment and income profile of persons with disabilities aged 15 years and over in Canada, 2022*. 2024, May 28. <<https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/89-654-x/89-654-x2024001-eng.htm>>

⁸ Ipsos. *Trails and Outdoor Recreation in BC*. 2023, June 2. <<https://www.ipsos.com/en-ca/trails-and-outdoor-recreation-bc>>

5 VISION AND GOALS



5.1 VISION

This vision for the future of parks and trails in Electoral Area C (Fort St. James Rural) was created based on community input, exploration of the trends and opportunities, and discussions with RDBN staff.

Over the next 10 years, the RDBN's Parks and Trails Service for Electoral Area C will:

- **Build on Community Strengths.** The RDBN seeks to build upon the strengths of the recreation services provided by others, including First Nations, BC Parks, Recreation Sites and Trails BC, and outdoor recreation organizations. These partnerships will create a cohesive and sustainable system that enhances the overall recreational experiences for all users.
- **Support the Creation of Safe Connections.** The parks and trails system in Electoral Area C will support connections between rural residents and Fort St. James, as well as connections to parks and key recreation 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 building and maintaining new infrastructure, as well as the creation of new or expanded parks, trails, and amenities to address gaps.
- **Celebrate the Region's Natural Beauty.** The parks and trails system will facilitate access to lakes, shorelines, unique natural areas, historic sites and trails, and important community destinations. The parks and trails system will protect and enhance the rich ecosystems of the region, preserving opportunities for wildlife viewing and appreciation of native flora and fauna for future generations.

5.2 GOALS

Five goals emerged to support the RDBN in achieving the vision for parks and trail. Specific recommendations are provided for each goal, to be accomplished over the next 10 years. The recommendations are outlined in the following section.

- **Goal 1:** Establish tools and processes to support the delivery of the Parks and Trails Service in Electoral Area C
- **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
- **Goal 5:** Support active transportation and a connected community

A person wearing a purple t-shirt, dark pants, and a white helmet is captured mid-air while performing a jump on a mountain bike. The bike is white with blue accents on the wheels. The background is a clear blue sky with some green trees visible at the bottom. A semi-transparent white banner is overlaid across the middle of the image, containing the section header.

6 RECOMMENDATIONS



The following section outlines key recommendations specific to each goal for Electoral Area C.

GOAL 1: ESTABLISH TOOLS AND PROCESSES TO SUPPORT THE DELIVERY OF THE PARKS AND TRAILS SERVICE IN ELECTORAL AREA C

This goal establishes a comprehensive approach to delivering parks and trails services in Electoral Area C. By providing a clear framework and consistent processes, this goal ensures the strategic allocation of resources for the parks and trails within Electoral Area C.

Recommendation 1.1

Continue to engage with other levels of government and community groups to identify and prioritize opportunities for the RDBN to provide parks and trails through partnerships or through direct acquisition and management.

This could take the form of a parks and trails “working group”. An example of this model is the Shuswap Trails Alliance, which brings together interest-holders across all sectors to one table for regular meetings to discuss, collaborate, coordinate, and share resources and knowledge. By bringing interest-holders together, the RDBN will help build community capacity and volunteerism and can also help identify ways to remove administrative burdens and increase collaboration toward shared priorities.

The members could be invited from First Nations, District of Fort St. James staff, BC Parks, RSTBC, Parks Canada, local outdoor recreation organizations, local stewardship organizations, local outdoor recreation businesses, youth representatives, etc.

Recommendation 1.2

Establish service levels for parks and trails, in line with the standards for other service areas.

For parks, develop a park management plan for future parks and update it every five years. Management plans should consider maintenance levels, infrastructure development and upgrades, universal accessibility, protection of environmentally sensitive areas, and invasive species management. Plans may also be informed by existing provincial park management plans.

For trails, once maintenance responsibilities are assumed, conduct regular trail inspections as described in the RDBN Parks and Trails Inspection and Maintenance Policy. This will help ensure trails are safe, well-maintained, and that appropriate resources and budget are allocated to maintenance.

First Nations consultation and archaeological assessments may be required for both parks and trails.

Recommendation 1.3

Consider adding staff to support the implementation of new parks and trails projects across the RDBN's four parks and trails service areas and ensure equitable distribution of staff time between the service areas as the network of parks and trails grows.

Recommendation 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.

GOAL 2: STRENGTHEN PARTNERSHIPS AND BUILD COMMUNITY CAPACITY

This goal emphasizes the importance of building robust partnerships and enhancing community capacity in the realm of parks and trails services. By fostering collaboration, providing financial support, and expanding land-use agreements, this goal aims to build a stronger community foundation and ensure effective management and development of parks and trail services.

Recommendation 2.1

Continue to engage and build relationships with First Nations, including for the protection and enhancement of cultural and ecological values.

A special feature of Electoral Area C is the long-distance historic trail connections that form part of the "Grease Trail" network, which were used for millennia to transport eulachon (oolichan) fish oil from the coast to the interior, driving a vast trade network. This could be an opportunity for collaboration (see Recommendation 3.6).

Recommendation 2.2

Continue the Recreation Contribution Grant Program that supports the RDBN in allocating multi-year funding to recreation organizations providing recreation services, such as regular maintenance of the snowmobile trail network. Continue to monitor the success of the program and adjust criteria for funding and reporting requirements as needed. Increase funding availability as resources allow, if needed.

While there is not currently a mountain biking or hiking organization in Electoral Area C, should a group emerge within these focus areas, funding would provide significant benefits, along with administrative and coordination support.

Recommendation 2.3

Continue to increase awareness of the RDBN's capacity to support outdoor recreation organizations, such as grant writing and coordination between different levels of government.

Recommendation 2.4

Facilitate collaboration between outdoor recreation groups who are actively engaged in maintaining parks and trail features within Electoral Area C.

GOAL 3: INCREASE ACCESS TO OUTDOOR RECREATION

This goal focuses on increasing access to outdoor recreation, particularly lakes and trails. By enhancing access, this goal aims to improve recreational opportunities while recognizing the significance of these natural assets.

Recommendation 3.1

Explore opportunities for the RDBN to support BC Parks in improving access to Mount Pope trails, including the T-Caves climbing area, and improving key amenities such as parking and washroom facilities.

Recommendation 3.2

Explore opportunities to improve year-round access to Stuart Lake along Stones Bay Road in support of non-motorized boating and cross-country ski trails on the lake.

Recommendation 3.3

Explore the potential for developing a small, water-access rustic campsite with basic amenities, and a natural shoreline boat landing to support paddlers, small craft boaters and backcountry recreation users on the north shore of Stuart Lake.

Long-term, this campsite is envisioned as a first step toward exploring a network of rustic campsites that would support a multi-day kayak and canoe route around Stuart Lake. The route would provide designated overnight options that improve safety, reduce informal shoreline use, and promote responsible, low-impact recreation while maintaining the lake's natural character.

Recommendation 3.4

Explore opportunities to coordinate with the District of Fort St. James to further develop the Mount Dickenson Trail, including improvements like accessibility, signage, connectivity, and improved viewpoints.

The steep one-kilometre trail begins within the District of Fort St. James and ends at a viewpoint in the Regional District. It is currently promoted in local brochures and used for both motorized and non-motorized recreation. There could be opportunities to realign portions of the trail to make it accessible to more trail users, even if universal accessibility standards are not possible due to the terrain. Additionally, implementing trail standards, adding amenities, establishing a parking area, and upgrading signage would help improve the trail.

Recommendation 3.5

Support intergovernmental collaboration for the formalization and improvement of the Graveyard Trails network. The role of the RDBN needs to be defined, but it could include coordination support and funding partnerships with the District of Fort St. James, BC Parks, and a local mountain bike or hiking group. At the time of this report, there is no formal mountain bike organization in Fort St. James.

Recommendation 3.6

Explore opportunities to partner with First Nations communities, local recreation organizations, and tourism organizations to create a long-term, shared vision for Grease Trails in the region. Depending on interest and capacity, a first phase could be to create an improvement and enhancement plan for the Nyan Wheti trail from Fort St. James to Fraser Lake, but other priorities might emerge through further discussions.

Recommendation 3.7

Secure long-term access to recreation and tourism areas by working with the community to identify priority resource roads. Identifying key access routes will strengthen advocacy to the Ministry of Forests to keep key access roads open for outdoor recreation and tourism.

GOAL 4: ENHANCE THE USER EXPERIENCE AT PARKS AND TRAILS

This goal aims to improve overall user experience within Regional District parks and trails. By prioritizing accessibility, information availability, cultural inclusion, and amenity expansion, this goal aims to create an enriched and user-friendly parks and trails system, enhancing community enjoyment and engagement.

Recommendation 4.1

Follow accessibility standards, such as the [Universal Design Guide](#) by BC Parks, when establishing or upgrading parks and trails. Support organizations managing trails by providing guidance on accessibility improvements and identifying potential funding sources.

Recommendation 4.2

Lead the development of a cohesive mapping and information system for trail networks in the region. Update the RDBN's website to provide more information about trails, including information about accessible features at trails, safety, wayfinding, and amenities.

Recommendation 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.

Recommendation 4.4

Support enhancements to the provincial RSTBC trails southwest of town, currently managed and maintained by the Fort St. James Snowmobile Club. These are four-season trails used by hikers, backpackers, cross-country skiers, snowmobiles, and ORVs. Improvements could include wheelchair access, picnic tables, and an outhouse.

Recommendation 4.5

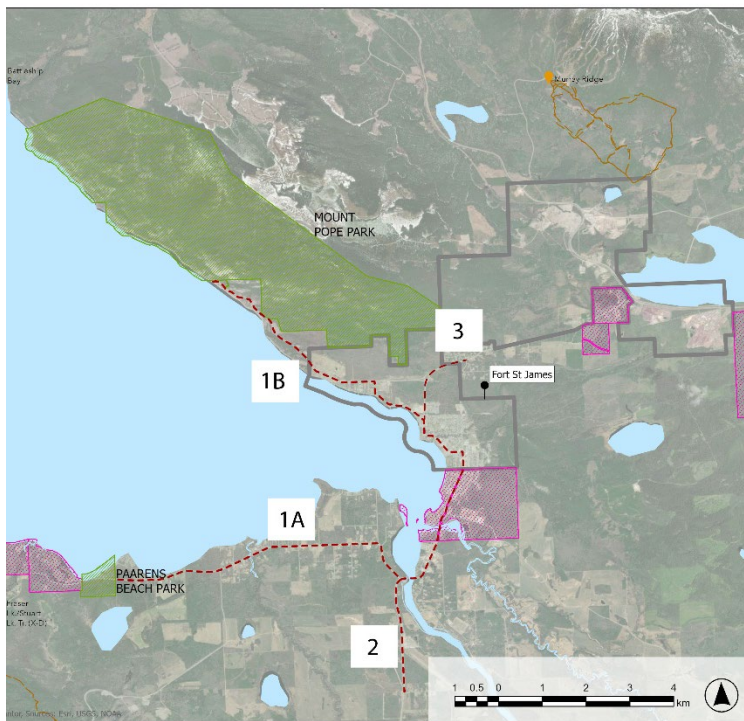
Work with RSTBC to identify priority sites for increased maintenance and management. Priority sites will include locations that improve public access to lakes and shorelines, are connected to parks and trails, and can accommodate camping, viewpoints, and other special features.

GOAL 5: SUPPORT ACTIVE TRANSPORTATION AND A CONNECTED COMMUNITY

This goal focuses on fostering active transportation and community connectivity within Electoral Area C. By addressing transportation needs and connectivity, this goal contributes to better access to recreation for all ages and abilities, improved access to services, and enhances tourism-readiness.

Recommendation 5.1

Advocate to the province to explore opportunities to connect communities and key recreation assets in Electoral Area C through the development of multi-use trails and pathways for both residents and tourists. As a long-term vision, there are three key routes proposed (Figure 5):



- **Route 1: (A)** Paarens Beach Provincial Park along Sowchea Road into Fort St. James and **(B)** continuing to Mount Pope Provincial Park;
- **Route 2:** Highway 27 from Fort St. James south to connect residents and businesses. A first phase could be to Airport Road, with future phases continuing south.
- **Route 3:** Highway 27 to Mowbay Road to connect residents with downtown Fort St. James. The link would connect to the existing protected pathway on the west shoulder of the highway and continue northeast of Stones Bay Road.

Figure 5 – Map of key routes proposed.

The bridges across the Necoslie and Stuart Rivers are critical links in achieving connections for Route 1 (A) and Route 2. All three routes should be coordinated with the District of Fort St. James and Nak'azdli Whut'en to enhance the plan for a Community Gateway and active transportation initiatives described in the Fort St. James Rural OCP.

7 IMPLEMENTATION PLAN



This Master Plan identifies recommendations to enhance parks and trails in Electoral Area C across a 10-year period from 2026 to 2036. 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.

An implementation table on the following pages outlines recommended actions, levels of prioritization, timelines, and resources required. Operational tasks are recommended to support staff work plans and departmental resources. Capital projects will be evaluated and integrated into budget planning, as subject to Board approval based on available resources and priorities.

RDBN’s partners will be responsible for implementing actions where they are the primary provider. Responsibilities for partners are highlighted in the implementation table for reference by the RDBN in discussions, monitoring, and assessing generated value from the RDBN’s investments. Aligning the objectives and priorities of community members and the RDBN will help improve their ability to meet community needs.

7.1 TIME FRAME

The table defines three time frames for implementation including:

- **Short term** – 0-5 years
- **Medium term** – 5-10 years
- **Long term** – 10+ years

Longer-term actions may be completed ahead of short-term actions depending on funding opportunities, partnerships, or other influencing factors. Actions will be sequenced as determined by the RDBN’s annual work plans to accommodate changing community needs and funding availability.

7.2 RESOURCES REQUIRED

Actions described in the implementation table come with associated costs including staff time, operational expenses, and/or capital investments. Resource requirements are categorized in the table as follows:

- **\$ - Low** – less than \$50,000
- **\$\$ - Medium** - \$50,000-\$100,000
- **\$\$\$ - High** – more than \$100,000

	Recommendation	Priority	Timeline	Resources	Other/Partners
GOAL 1: ESTABLISH TOOLS AND PROCESSES TO SUPPORT THE DELIVERY OF THE PARKS AND TRAILS SERVICE IN ELECTORAL AREA C					
1.1	Continue to engage with other levels of government and community organizations to identify and prioritize opportunities for the RDBN to provide parks and trails through partnerships or through direct acquisition and management.	High	Ongoing	\$	- Community groups - RSTBC - BC Parks - First Nations - District of Fort St. James
1.2	Establish service levels for parks and trails, in line with the standards for other service areas. For future parks and trails, develop management plans and update the plans every five years (see report for full recommendation details).	High	Medium	\$	
1.3	Consider adding staff to support the implementation of parks and trails projects in Electoral Area C and across the RDBN’s four parks and trails service areas.	Medium	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.	Medium	Long	\$	- BC Government - First Nations - Community groups
GOAL 2: STRENGTHEN PARTNERSHIPS AND BUILD COMMUNITY CAPACITY					
2.1	Continue to engage and build relationships with First Nations, including for the protection and enhancement of cultural and ecological values.	High	Ongoing	\$	First Nations
2.2	Continue to implement the Recreation Contribution Grant Program that provides allocation of multi-year funding to recreation organizations providing recreation services.	High	Ongoing	\$\$	Community organizations
2.3	Continue to increase awareness of the RDBN’s capacity to support outdoor recreation organizations, such as grant writing and coordination between different levels of government.	High	Short-Ongoing	\$	- Internal: RDBN grant writers - Outdoor Recreation Groups
2.4	Facilitate collaboration between outdoor recreation groups who are actively engaged in maintaining parks and trail features within Electoral Area C.	High	Short-ongoing	\$	- Internal: RDBN grant writers - Outdoor Recreation Groups
GOAL 3: INCREASE ACCESS TO OUTDOOR RECREATION					
3.1	Explore opportunities for the RDBN to support BC Parks in improving access to Mount Pope trails, including the T-Caves climbing area, and improve key amenities such as parking and washroom facilities.	Medium	Long	\$\$	BC Parks

	Recommendation	Priority	Timeline	Resources	Other/Partners
3.2	Explore opportunities to improve year-round access to Stuart Lake along Stones Bay Road in support of non-motorized boating and cross-country ski trails on the lake.	Medium	Medium	\$\$	
3.3	Explore the potential for developing a small, water-access rustic campsite with basic amenities and a natural shoreline boat landing on the north shore of Stuart Lake.	High	Short	\$-\$\$	- District of Fort St. James - Project underway
3.4	Explore opportunities to coordinate with the District of Fort St. James to further develop the Mount Dickenson Trail, including improvements like accessibility, signage, connectivity, and improved viewpoints.	High	Medium	\$* <i>*Dependent on joint funding opportunities</i>	- District of Fort St. James - Community Forest
3.5	Support intergovernmental collaboration to formalize and improve the Graveyard Trails network.	Low	Long	\$-\$\$\$	- District of Fort St. James - BC Parks - Landowners
3.6	Explore opportunities to partner with First Nations communities, local recreation organizations, and tourism organizations to create a long-term, shared vision for the Grease Trail network in the region.	Medium	Medium	\$\$	- First Nations - Local recreation organizations - Tourism organizations - Heritage BC
3.7	Secure long-term access to recreation and tourism areas by working with the community to identify priority resource roads. Identifying key access routes will strengthen advocacy to the Ministry of Forests to keep the roads open for outdoor recreation and tourism.	High	Short	\$	Province of BC
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 parks and trails. Support organizations managing trails by providing guidance on accessibility improvements and identifying potential funding sources.	Medium	Medium	\$\$* <i>*Dependent on grant funding opportunities</i>	Internal: RDBN Accessibility Committee
4.2	Lead the development of a cohesive mapping and information system for trail networks in the region. Update the RDBN’s website to provide more information about trails, including information about accessible features at trails, safety, wayfinding, and amenities.	High	Short	\$ - website update \$\$- mapping and info system	- RDBN Accessibility Committee - Coordinate with Tourism Plan
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	Medium	\$-\$\$	First Nations

	Recommendation	Priority	Timeline	Resources	Other/Partners
4.4	Support enhancements to the provincial RSTBC trails southwest of town, currently managed and maintained by the Fort St. James Snowmobile Club.	High	Medium	\$* <i>*Dependent on grant funding opportunities</i>	- Fort St. James Snowmobile Club - RSTBC
4.5	Work with RSTBC to identify priority sites for increased maintenance and management.	Medium	Medium	\$	RSTBC
GOAL 5: SUPPORT ACTIVE TRANSPORTATION AND A CONNECTED COMMUNITY					
5.1	Advocate to the province to explore opportunities to connect communities and key recreation assets in Electoral Area C through the development of multi-use trails and pathways for both residents and tourists. As a long-term vision, there are three key routes proposed: Route 1: (A) Paarens Beach Provincial Park along Sowchea Road into Fort St. James and (B) continuing to Mount Pope Provincial Park; Route 2: Highway 27 from Fort St. James south to connect residents and businesses. A first phase could be to Airport Road, with future phases continuing south. Route 3: Highway 27 to Mowbay Road to connect residents with downtown Fort St. James. The link would connect to the existing protected pathway on the west shoulder of the highway and continue northeast of Stones Bay Road.	(High) 1. Route 1A 2. Route 3 3. Route 1B (Low) 4. Route 2	Long-term – project will be divided into phases	\$\$-\$\$\$* <i>*Specific project costs are dependent on the location and design</i>	- Province of BC - Other land managers

APPENDIX A
WHAT WE HEARD REPORT

Regional District of Bulkley-Nechako

Parks and Trails Master Plan

For Electoral Area C (Fort St. James Rural)

Engagement Summary

Prepared for:



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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The Regional District of Bulkley-Nechako (RDBN) is developing a Parks and Trails Master Plan for Electoral Area C (Fort St. James Rural). This plan will create a strategy and plan of action for parks and trails that reflects the unique character, culture, and geography of the region.

Community input is key to the success of this initiative. To make sure that the Plan reflects a community vision and a wide range of perspectives, consultation included outreach to the public and key rights and interest-holders including outdoor clubs, community groups, and Indigenous communities. Consultation with BC Parks, Recreation Sites and Trails BC (RSTBC), local governments, and organizations was also completed to coordinate efforts and build on existing infrastructure and service offerings.

The engagement program took place in two rounds which provided participants an opportunity to shape the vision and priorities for parks and trails in the area, then provide feedback on the Draft Master Plan before the final revision.

Round 1 engagement included stakeholder meetings, stakeholder interviews, a public online survey, and a public pop-up event. Round 2 engagement included a public online survey, and a virtual public open house. The details of these activities are described below, and the results are summarized in this report.

1.2 FIRST NATIONS ENGAGEMENT

The RDBN invited fifteen First Nations that have identified as having consultation areas within the RDBN's Electoral Area C to participate in individual rights holder meetings, as well as extending the invitation to participate in the public pop-ups and online surveys. There have been no requests for meetings to date.

The RDBN is committed to fostering robust relationships with local First Nations and acknowledges the significance of considering their interests and values. This includes the protection of culturally significant areas within the parks system. As further input is offered in the future, it will be integrated into the decision-making process.

1.3 OVERALL PLANNING PROCESS

The Parks and Trails Master Plan process includes the following five phases. This Engagement Summary summarizes feedback received during Phase 2 and 4 of the planning process, and two rounds of community engagement (Figure 1).



Figure 1: The project timeline for the Parks and Trails Master Plan.

2 ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY

2.1 PURPOSE OF ENGAGEMENT

The first round of engagement, held in late summer 2025, asked stakeholders, rightsholders, potential partners, and the public to share how parks, trails, and recreation areas are meeting their needs in Electoral Area C. This round also identified key challenges and opportunities for the provision and operation of parks and trails, as well as potential strategies to improve partnership and coordination. The feedback from the first round of engagement helped gather information on any potential gaps and identified future needs. Engagement also informed the vision, goals, and recommendations presented in the Draft Parks and Trails Master Plan.

The second round of engagement, held in early spring of 2026, asked the community to confirm the draft vision and goals and provide feedback on key recommendations in the Draft Parks and Trails Master Plan. The engagement results were considered in the refinement of the vision, goals, and recommendations in the Final Parks and Trails Master Plan, as well as setting priorities and timelines for the implementation plan.

2.2 OUTREACH AND PARTICIPATION

Public consultation activities included three virtual interest-holder workshops, two online public surveys, one virtual open house, and a community pop-up event. Further details about each activity are provided below, and a summary of the results is included in this report.

A combination of phone calls, email invitations, newspaper ads, and social media posts was used to encourage participation in this engagement series. The RDBN website served as a central hub for all updates, information on how to participate, and a link to the online surveys.

Engagement by the Numbers

183 participants in two online surveys

9 participants in the community workshops

1 virtual open house

1 pop-up event at the Fort St. James Night Market

2.3 ROUND 1 ENGAGEMENT TOOLS

2.3.1 INTEREST-HOLDER WORKSHOPS

In fall of 2025, three virtual workshops were held in Round 1 with interest-holders, including local and provincial government representatives, community organizations, and school representatives. At the time of the workshops, a BC Government Employees Union strike delayed engagement with staff of provincial agencies. Interviews with individual knowledge holders were also conducted. Participants included representatives from:

- Elected officials from RDBN Electoral Area 'C'
- Elected officials from District of Fort St. James
- Fire Smart
- BC Parks
- Stuart Lake Nordic Society
- Stuart Lake Seniors Association
- Fort St. James Snowmobile Club
- Fort St. James Dog Sled Association
- Fort St. James Secondary School
- Murray Ridge Ski Area

Workshops involved a brief presentation on the project and a discussion about the current state of parks and trails in the region, challenges faced by interest-holders, and opportunities to improve outdoor recreation amenities in Electoral Area C.

2.3.2 ROUND 1 ONLINE PUBLIC SURVEY

Public input was gathered through an online survey posted on the Regional District's website. The results were collected through the online platform Survey Monkey and are summarized in Section 3.1 of this report.

Round 1 - Survey responses from the first round engagement were collected from August 15th to September 30th, 2025, with a total of 107 responses. Survey questions asked the community to reflect on needs and aspirations for parks, trails, and recreation. Questions aimed to understand:

- The most popular trails and outdoor activities for the community and children specifically
- The frequency of trail use
- Barriers for visiting parks and using trails
- Key destinations visited
- Main priorities for parks, trails, and active transportation
- Level of support for tax increases
- Any additional comments

2.3.3 ROUND 1 PUBLIC POP-UP EVENT

One in-person pop-up event was held at the Fort St. James Night Market at Caledonia Days on August 15th, 2025, from 4:00-8:00pm. Facilitators from the Regional District and LEES were present to gather feedback, guide conversation, and answer questions.

The pop-up event introduced the project to the community and provided information about parks and trails planning in the area. Display boards prompted participants to share their vision for parks and trails, identify key locations they would like to see prioritized, and share what features and amenities were most important. The pop-up also encouraged participation in the online survey.

The following questions were asked on the display boards:

- What areas should be prioritized for future parks and trails?
- What features and amenities would you like to see in Regional District parks?
- What features and amenities would you like to see in Regional District trails?
- Over the next 10 years, what are the most important priorities for parks and trails?
- What is your vision for the future of parks and trails in Electoral Area C (Fort St. James Rural)?

2.4 ROUND 2 ENGAGEMENT TOOLS

2.4.1 ROUND 2 ONLINE SURVEY

Survey responses for round 2 engagement were collected from February 16th to March 23rd, 2026, with a total of 76 responses. Survey questions asked for community input on the Draft Parks and Trails Master Plan. Questions aimed to understand:

- Level of support and missing information for the draft vision and five goals
- Level of support for forming a parks and trails working group
- Interest in the formation of hiking and mountain biking organization
- Top priorities for increasing access and improvements to outdoor recreation
- Top priority for creating a roadside trail connection
- Any additional comments

2.4.2 VIRTUAL OPEN HOUSE

In February of 2026, a virtual open house was held. The event was open to all members of the community and was promoted via the RDBN's website, social media posts, newspaper ads, and through direct emails to interest-holders. The open house included a presentation on the Draft Parks and Trails Master Plan with an opportunity for questions and comments from those attending. Information presented included the following:

- Overview of the project
- The role of the RDBN in supporting parks and trails
- The current state of parks and trails
- Key demographics and service providers
- Opportunities for parks and trails
- Key findings from community engagement in round 1
- The draft vision, goals, and recommendations

The presentation of the Draft Parks and Trails Master Plan was also recorded and posted to the RDBN's website for viewing by those who could not attend.

3 ENGAGEMENT OUTCOMES

3.1 ROUND 1 ENGAGEMENT RESULTS

3.1.1 INTEREST-HOLDER WORKSHOPS

(1) Elected Officials

- Land acquisition at Stuart Lake is under consideration to support a water access campsite and campsite improvements. There is potential for the establishment of a circuit that is proposed to tie into BC Parks and other sites.
- While trails are informally managed by community groups, the lack of formal leadership presents challenges for coordination. Volunteers contribute considerably to the trail system but have limited capacity to take on additional responsibilities.
- Some trails are located within FireSmart fuel treatment areas, and there may be a synergy between fuel management and trails establishment and maintenance.
- Pedestrian safety and active transportation was raised as a priority.

(2) BC Parks

- Limited staffing was identified as a challenge.
- There is a desire to improve connections between user groups and volunteers.
- An outhouse at Mt. Pope has been requested by the community.
- The climbing trailhead parking is at capacity.
- Improving partnership with the RDBN would help coordinate signage and promote trail improvements.
- There is an opportunity to work with the Nak'azdli to improve the Grease Trail by joining McLeod Lake with a section of Carp Lake.

(3) Community Organizations

- The Seniors Association would benefit from improved safety for pedestrians, cyclists, and equestrians along Sowchea Road.
- Community organizations expressed that volunteer capacity, risk and liability, and securing access to trail areas that intersect with private property are key challenges.
- It was noted that there is no walking trail on the bridge crossing the Stuart River. However, Necoslie River has a good walking trail on the bridge.
- Improvements for walking and cycling from Sowchea Road into Fort St. James were identified as a priority.
- The Graveyard Trails are well-loved, but are located on Crown, private and BC Parks land.

- The need for improved bike safety to protect cyclists commuting around the town from industrial traffic was expressed.
- There are opportunities for a trail from the subdivision north of town along the old railway bed and gas line to town. People currently bike on the highway.
- Protection of boat launches and water access is a priority. Boat launches on Stuart Lake are in place at Paarens Beach, Sowchea Bay, and Big Bay.
- Additional parking near Stuart Lake for vehicles and boat trailers was requested.
- Snowmobile trails would benefit from wheelchair access, picnic tables, and an outhouse.
- The Nordic Club faces challenges as a few key volunteers are responsible for trail maintenance. They would like to offer trails closer to town, and on Stuart Lake.
- Access to the lake around Mt. Pope was identified as a challenge, especially for canoes and kayaks.
- The Nordic trail would benefit from the burial of overhead electrical lines, which are frequently impacted by tree blowdown.
- **Key Locations shared:**
 - Stuart Lake
 - Necoslie River
 - Graveyard trails
 - Paarens Beach
 - Big Bay
 - Mt. Dickinson
 - Nyan Wheti Trail, south of Fort St. James
 - Sowchea Road connection to Fort St. James, including improvements to the Highway 27 bridge over the Stuart River
 - Mount Pope

3.1.2 ROUND 1 PUBLIC POP-UP EVENT

- The Graveyard Trails were frequently mentioned as being well used but under-developed.
- Traditional First Nations travel routes were mentioned as an opportunity for developing long-range and inter-regional trails. Routes mentioned spanned from Takla to Fort Babine, Fort St James to McLeod Lake, and Fraser Lake to Stuart Lake.
- The Mt. Pope trails and climbing routes were described as well-used but in need of additional infrastructure such as pit toilets.
- Participants expressed a need for additional formal boat launches on Stuart Lake.
- Concerns were expressed regarding the decommissioning of Forestry Service Roads, which are regularly used for recreation (hiking, ATVing, etc.) and access to wilderness areas.

3.1.3 ROUND 1 ONLINE SURVEY

The following key findings shared in the round 1 online survey include:

- **Trail use** – More than three quarters of respondents use trails at least weekly, most often for hiking, walking for exercise, or dog walking, with winter activities also popular. For children, the most common activities are hiking, ATV/snowmobiling, cycling, dog walking, and mountain biking.
- **Diverse recreation opportunities** – The most popular outdoor recreation activities were water-based including swimming and visiting lakes and beaches. Children most commonly went camping, swimming/going to the lake, and downhill skiing. Respondents also particularly valued camping, fishing, kayaking, and canoeing.
- **Barriers to park and trail access** – Roughly one-third of respondents do not face barriers to accessing parks and trails within the Service Area. Those who did most commonly listed barriers including poor maintenance, limited time, and a lack of information.
- **Key trail destinations** – Mount Pope was overwhelmingly the most commonly mentioned destination. Stuart River, Murray Ridge, and Sowchea Bay were also popular mentions.
- **Parks and trail planning priorities** – Respondents would like to see the RDBN prioritize the creation and management of a new trails network over the next ten years. They would also like to prioritize the creation of connections between communities and key destinations.
- **Recreation priorities** - They would also like to see more opportunities to be active, specifically hiking and walking as a main priority which could include improved trail signage identified as a priority.
- **Tax increases** - Most respondents were supportive of tax increases to fund parks and trails.

3.2 ROUND 2 ENGAGEMENT RESULTS

3.2.1 ROUND 2 VIRTUAL OPEN HOUSE

The following input was shared during the virtual open house, including:

- **Mount Pope challenges**
 - Desire for toilets at the Mount Pope trailhead to accommodate a large volume of people.
 - Concern over fire risk from a blowdown was noted.
 - BC Parks has conducted a trail assessment but noted a challenge of maintaining trails without a formalized biking group.
- **Access road potential** – A proposed mine development in the area has potential to open up access to FSR routes.
- **Trail organization limitations** – Establishing a shared trail organization may be a challenge, as local residents currently maintain trails on an as-needed basis. However, a potential

opportunity was identified to hire an individual to manage trails at the north end of Takla Lake.

- **Active transportation priorities** – Top priorities to improve safety along Sowchea and Necoslie Road.

3.2.2 ROUND 2 ONLINE SURVEY

The following key findings shared in the round 2 online survey include:

- **Vision and goals** - Respondents support the draft vision and five goals overall.
- **Strengthen relationship with local First Nations** – Survey respondents noted they would like to see local First Nations recognized in the vision statement. Multiple comments stressing the importance of meaningful collaboration with Nak’zadli and Dakelh peoples and concern over the lack of involvement in developing the Plan.
- **Parks and Trails Working Group** – Survey respondents shared support for the formation of a Parks and Trails Working Group by the RDBN. Respondents would like to ensure local First Nations are involved throughout the process and an acknowledgement of the limitations that may hinder long-term growth, such as capacity concerns.
- **Forming a hiking or biking organization** – There is a strong desire and support from community to form a hiking and mountain biking organization, with more frequent mentions of a hiking group. A few respondents are interested in taking the lead but many noted limitations due to capacity and time but interest in participating. There is also a desire to support the existing organizations and acknowledgment of the work that unofficial groups have done on the trails.
- **Improvements to access** - Respondents would like to prioritize access to the Mount Pope trails, T-caves climbing area, as well as year-round access to Stuart Lake along Stones Bay Road.
- **Trail upgrades** - Respondents would like to prioritize trail and trailhead upgrades to be more accessible, and adding new support amenities, like pit toilets. They would also like to reuse and revitalize unmaintained spaces (e.g. former forestry campsites, cultural, and historically significant locations).
- **Roadside trail connections** – Throughout engagement, the community shared a strong desire for safer trail connections in town and from the rural area to town. Participants were asked to prioritize roadside trail connections up for consideration by the RDBN. All three segments, including Sowchea Road to Fort St. James, Airport Road to Fort St. James, and Fort St. James to Mount Pope were generally ranked equally with a slight preference for the segment along Sowchea Road into Fort St. James, including bridge improvements.

3.2.3 ADDITIONAL FEEDBACK RECEIVED

The RDBN received additional feedback through email messages including:

- **BC Parks** – Provided updates on BC park locations, associated area measurements, and feedback on recommendations pertaining to lands under jurisdiction. They also shared challenges, including need for a formal bike organization and challenge with accessing the Mount Pope climbing area due to private access.
- **Fort St. James** – Provided feedback and updates regarding provided park amenities.
- **Anonymous** - Shared feedback on formatting and readability of the Master Plan as well as clarification on boat launches provided on RSTBC sites.

4 SUMMARY OF KEY THEMES

Section four summarizes key themes from round 1 and 2 of engagement, including challenges, opportunities, and priorities identified from workshops, surveys, the in-person pop-up event, and the virtual open house.

4.1 CHALLENGES

Key challenges identified include:

- **Volunteer capacity** - A limited capacity, aging group of volunteers, and informal maintenance limits regular maintenance, increases concerns with risk and liability, and minimizes opportunities to secure trail access across private lands.
- **Safety on roads** - A lack of safe and accessible walking and cycling connections in and around Fort St. James trails is of particular concern along busy roadways.
- **Resource access** - Difficulties accessing resources from other levels of government outside of the RDBN and a lack of information limit ongoing trail maintenance.
- **Wildfire risk** - A growing risk of wildfire continues to place pressures on existing recreation areas.

4.2 OPPORTUNITIES

Opportunities were also identified and include:

- **Trail networks** - Formalizing and improving existing trail networks, particularly the Graveyard Trails and ensuring access as development occurs nearby.
- **Trail connections** - Establishing a continuous trail connection from Sowchea Bay Road to Fort St. James and onward to the Graveyard Trails and Mount Pope Provincial Park.
- **Winter access** - Providing additional winter trail access to expand cross-country skiing opportunities, especially closer to town.
- **Lake access** - Increasing access to lakes by improving boat launches and parking.
- **Accessible trails** - Improving trail accessibility, wayfinding, signage and comfort amenities across existing trails.
- **Funding** - Securing funding to support existing and new local recreation organizations.
- **New organizations** - Forming a hiking or biking organization.
- **Working group** - Establishing a Parks and Trails working group.

4.3 SUPPORT FOR THE PLAN

Overall, there was strong support for the Parks and Trails Master Plan, including:

- **89%** of online survey respondents supportive or very supportive of the Vision.
- **88%** of online survey respondents supportive or very supportive of the Goals.
- Support expressed by those attending the **virtual open house** presentation of the Draft Master Plan.
- Organizational support from **BC Parks and the District of Fort St. James** through feedback received.

4.4 PRIORITIES

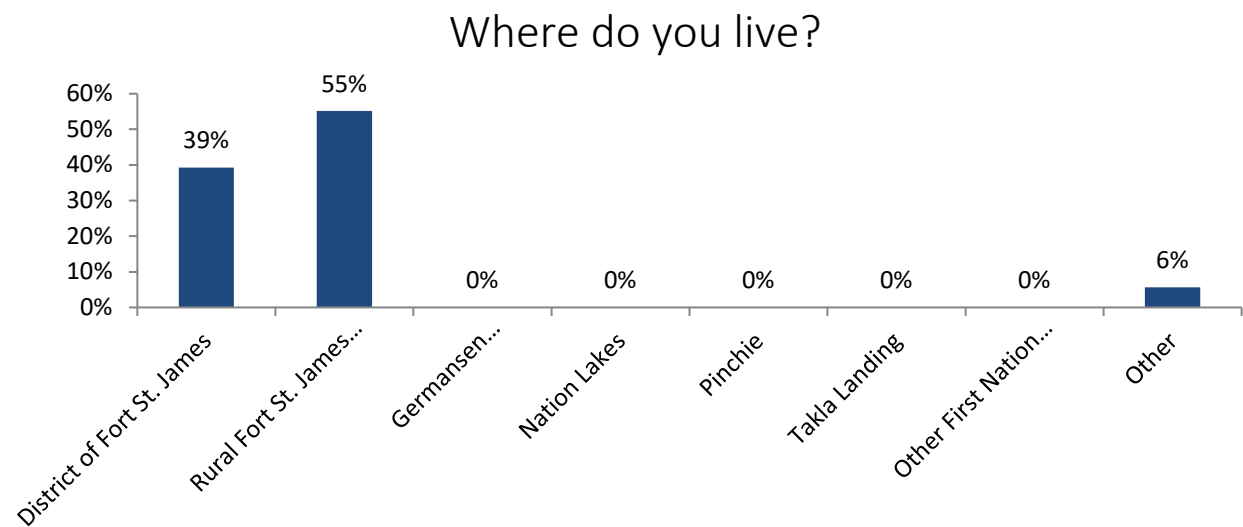
Community priorities place emphasis on trail connectivity, increasing access, and improving stewardship. Key priorities include:

- **Trail improvement** - Creating and managing new trails, including mountain biking trails, alongside upgrading existing routes. This includes joining McLeod Lake and Nak'adzli to improve the Grease Trail.
- **Local First Nations** - Acknowledging and prioritizing local First Nations in the overall vision of the Parks and Trails Master Plan and ensuring their meaningful involvement in the establishment of a Parks and Trails working group.
- **Safe connections** - Developing safer connections between communities and key destinations, specifically Sowchea Road linking to Fort St. James.
- **Additional land** - Acquiring new land for regional parks to protect environmentally sensitive areas.
- **Recreation opportunities** - Expanding opportunities for year round recreation and nature opportunities.
- **Recreation access** - Improving access to beaches, the Mount Pope trails, the T-caves climbing area, and year-round access to Stuart Lake along Stones Bay Road.
- **New amenities** - Adding supporting amenities including pit toilets, improved signage, and accessible trail upgrades, to support tourism opportunities.

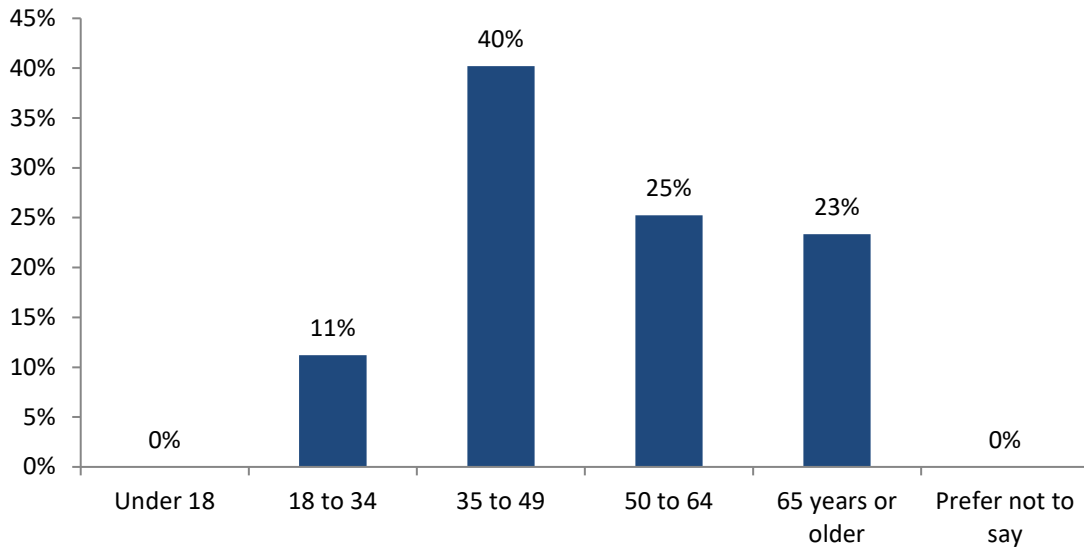
APPENDIX A: ONLINE SURVEY 1 SUMMARY

Who Responded

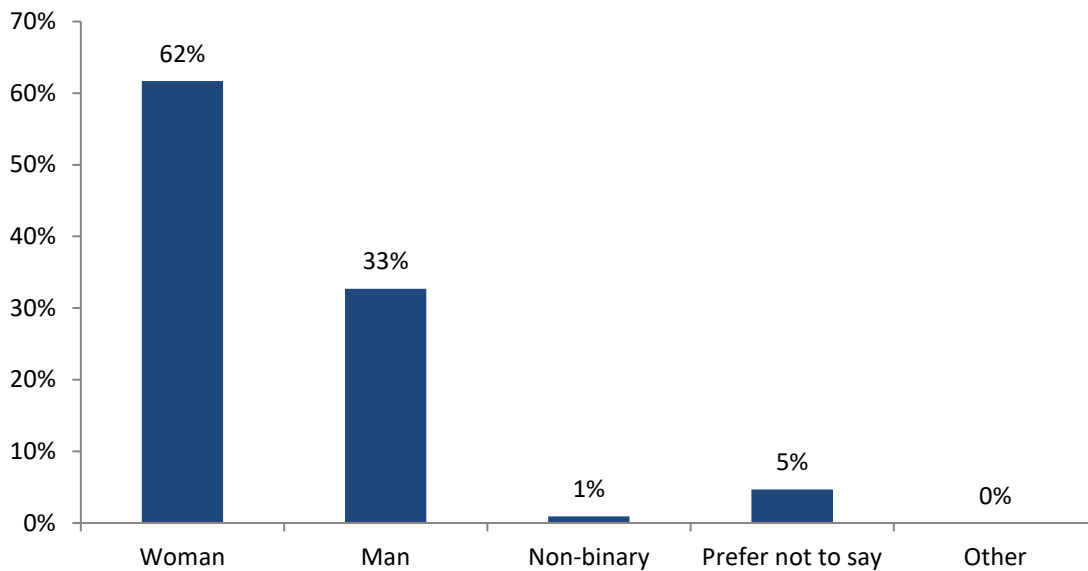
- The survey was completed by a total of 107 respondents.
- The majority of respondents identified as women (62%).
- The largest age group of respondents were between 35 and 49 years of age (40%).
- Less than half of respondents noted having children under the age of 18 living at home (37%).
- The majority of respondents were from Rural Fort St James, up to 20km from municipal limits (55%).



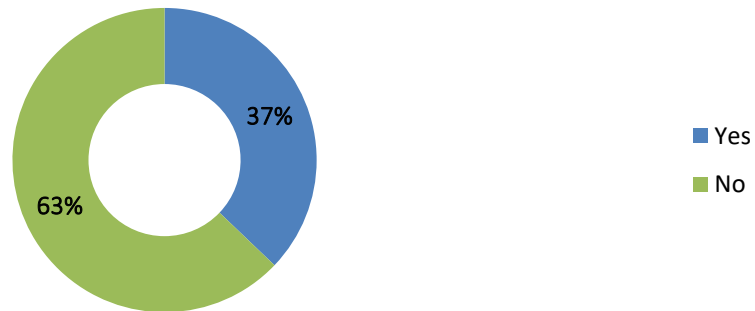
What age category are you?



What gender do you identify with?



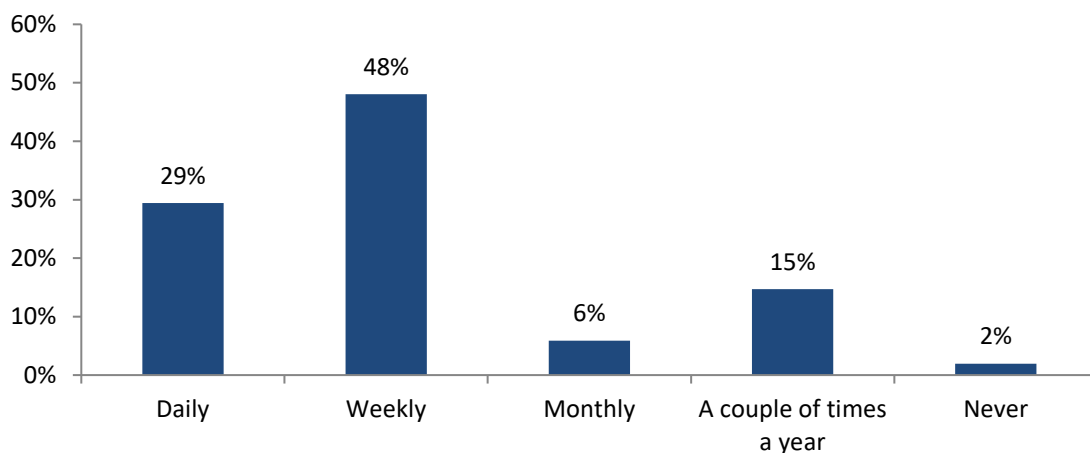
Do you have children under the age of 18 living at home?



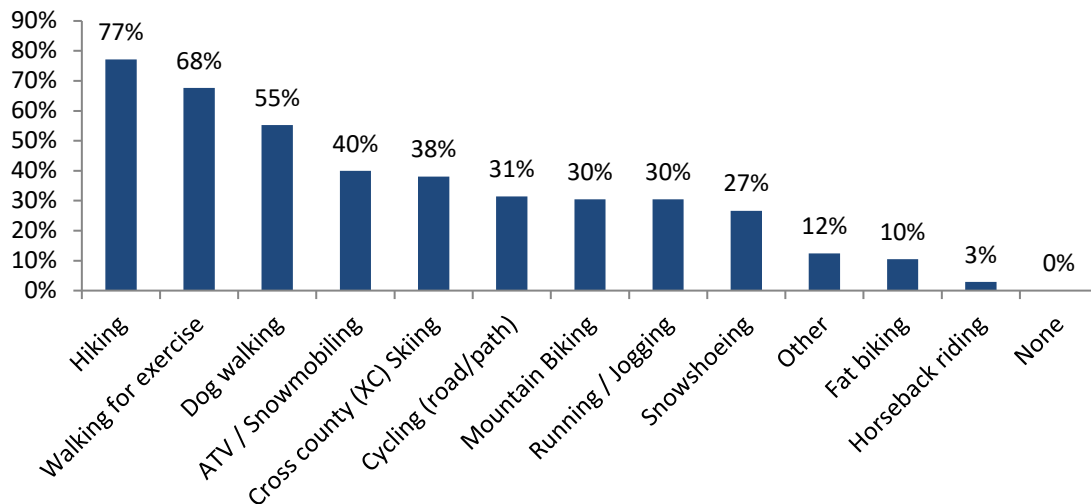
Trail Use Habits

- Roughly three-quarters of respondents noted using trails at least on a weekly basis (77%).
- The most popular trail activities among respondents were hiking (77%), walking for exercise (68%), and dog walking (55%).
- Though not as popular as summer activities, a significant portion of respondents reported participating in winter trail activities.
- The most popular trail activity among the children of respondents was hiking (69%), though ATV/snowmobiling (49%), cycling (49%), dog walking (44%), and mountain biking (44%) were also common responses.

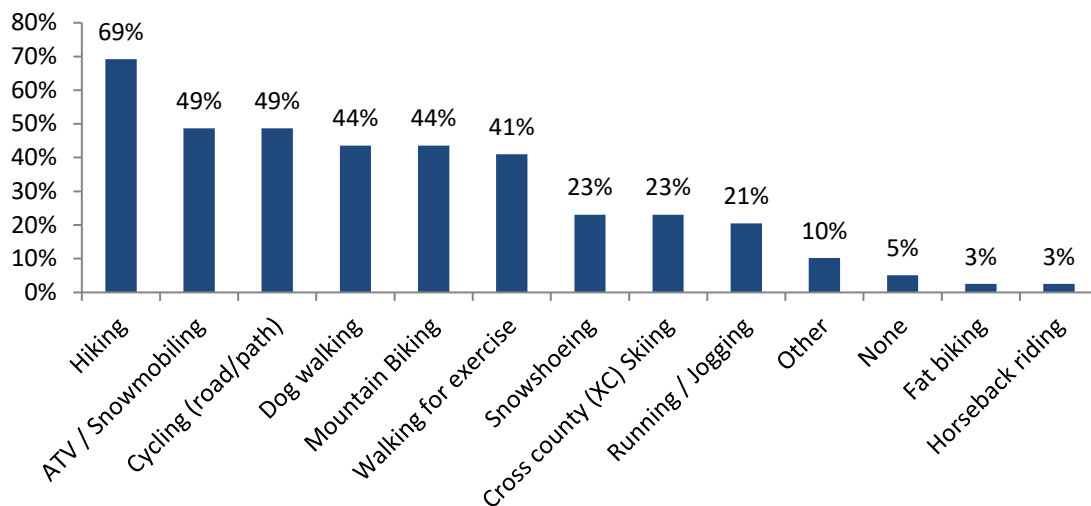
How often do you use trails?



What types of trail activities do you do most often? (Select all that apply)



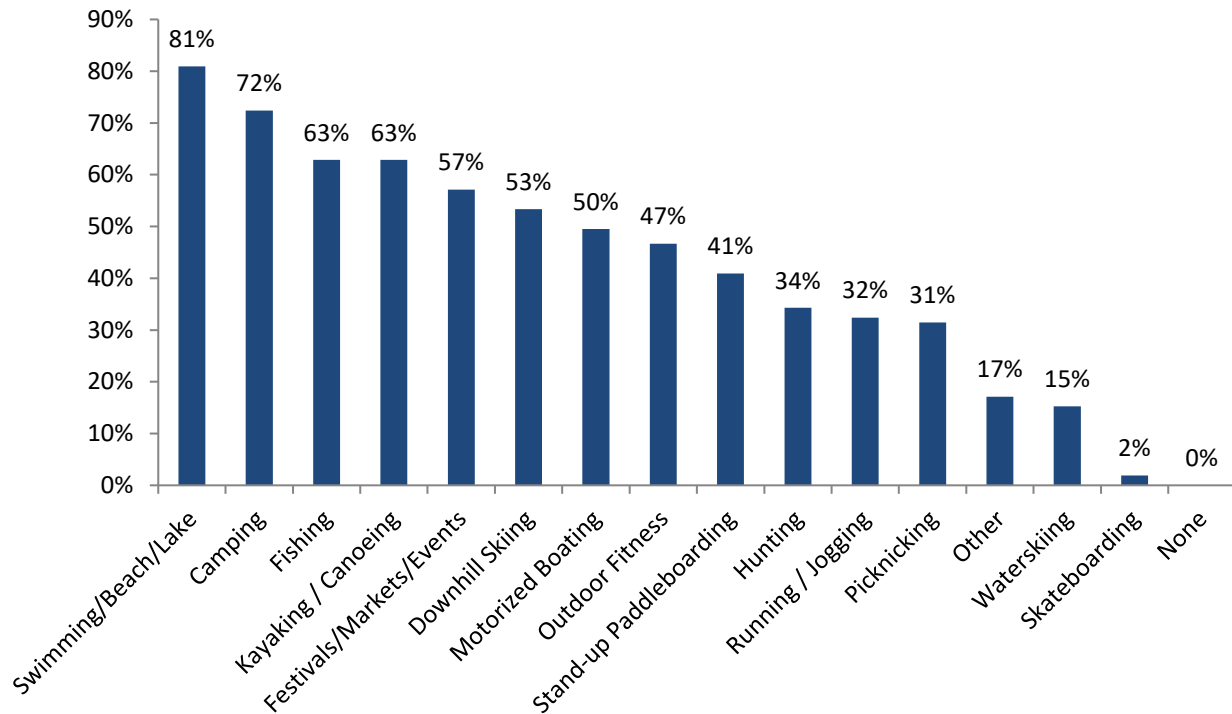
What types of trail activities do your children do most often? (Select all that apply).



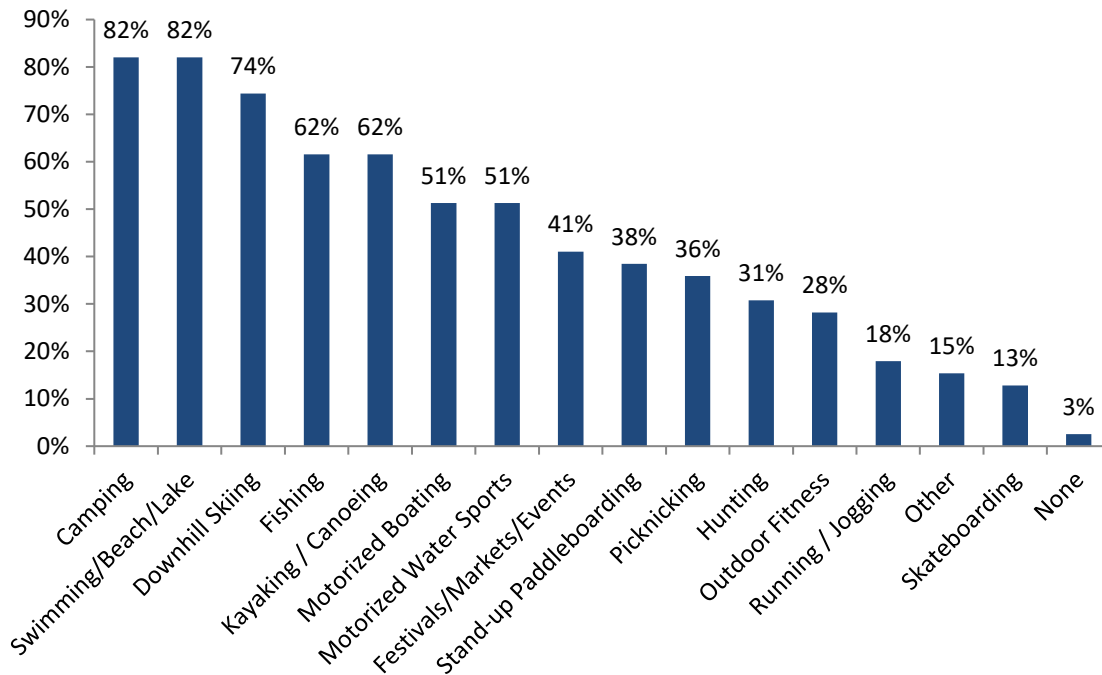
Outdoor Recreation Habits

- Water-based activities such as swimming and visitation of lakes and beaches were the most popular outdoor recreation activities among respondents (81%).
- Many respondents participated in camping (72%), fishing (63%), kayaking and canoeing (63%), festivals, markets, or other events (57%), and downhill skiing (53%).
- The most popular outdoor recreation activities among the children of respondents were camping (82%), swimming/going to the lake (82%), and downhill skiing (74%).

What types outdoor activities do you enjoy? Think of all times of the year. (Select all that apply).



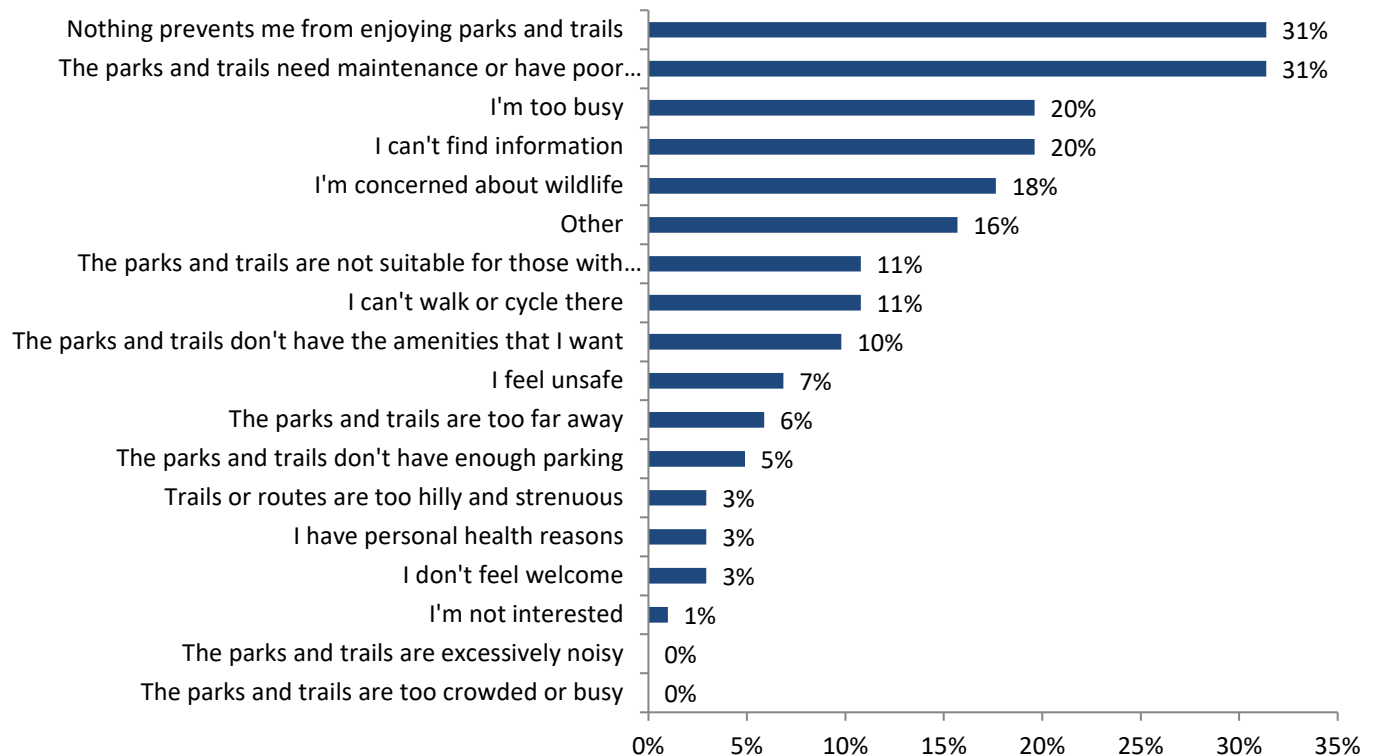
What types outdoor activities do your children enjoy? Think of all seasons and times of the year. (Select all that apply).



Barriers to Accessing Outdoor Recreation

- The primary barriers to using parks and trails more often were poor park and trail maintenance (31%), being too busy (20%), and lack of information (20%).
- Roughly one-third of respondents said they don't face any barriers in accessing parks and trails (31%).

What, if anything, keeps you from visiting parks or getting out on trails more often? (Select your top 3 reasons).



Key Destinations

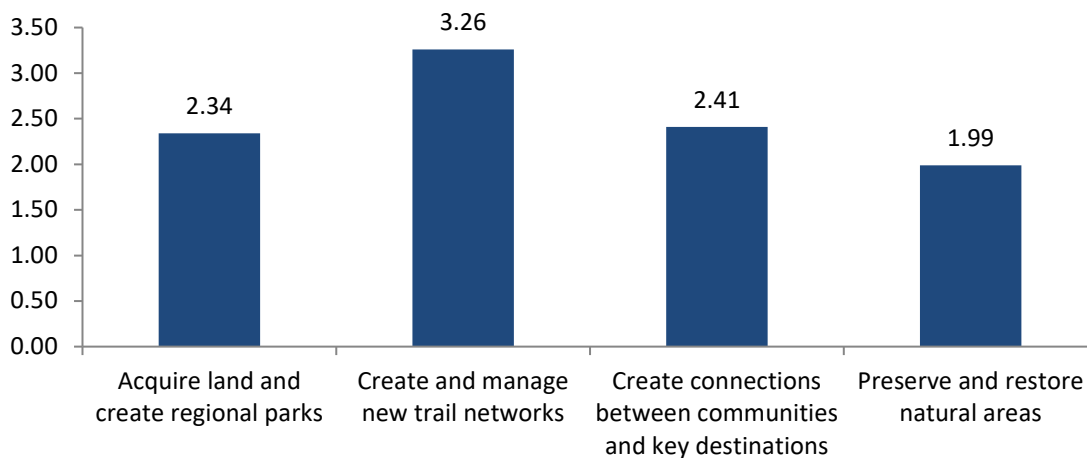
Destinations raised by engagement participants included:

- Mt. Pope trails (n=60)
- Stuart River (n=26)
- Murray Ridge trails (n=25)
- Sowchea Bay (n=14)
- Paarens Beach Provincial Park trails (n=11)
- Graveyard trails (n=9)
- Mt. Dickinson trails (n=7)
- Cottonwood Park (n=6)
- T-Caves (n=6)
- Nyan Wheti (n=3)
- Jim Henry Trail (n=2)
- Whitefish Bay (n=2)
- Russ Baker Memorial (n=1)
- Pinchi Mountain (n=1)

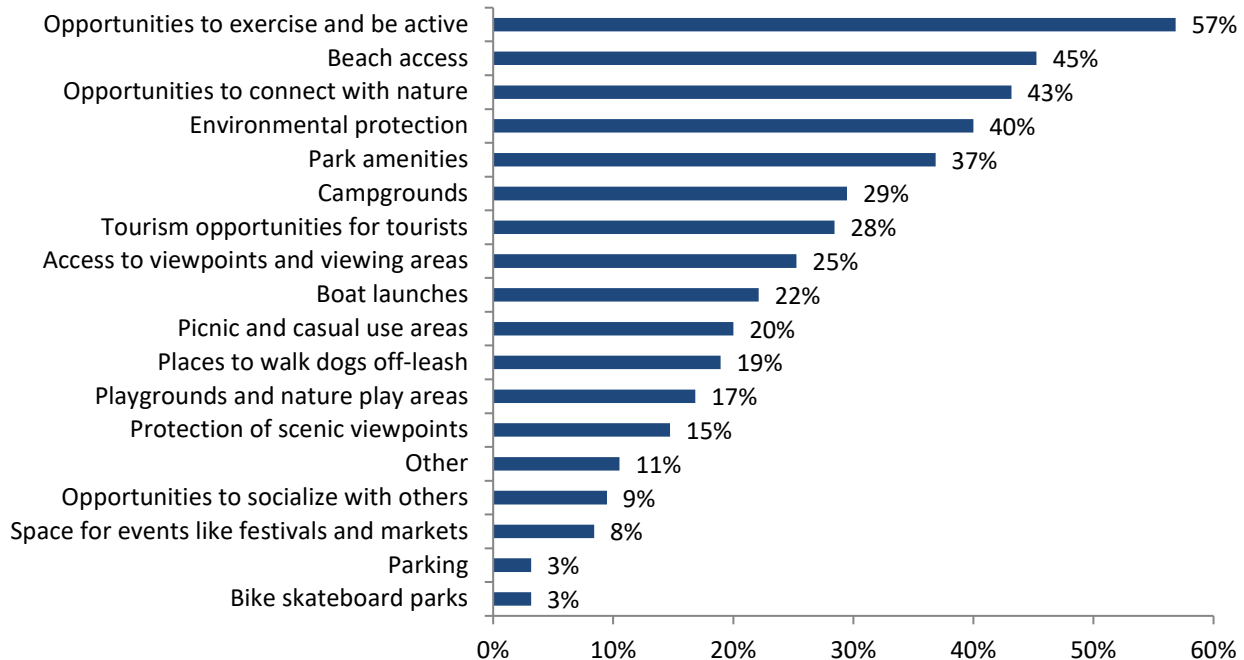
Park and Trails Priorities

- Respondents indicated that the **creation and management of new trails networks** should be prioritized over the next 10 years (Score of 3.26/4). 56% of respondents selected this as their top priority.
- The **creation of connections between communities and key destinations** was of importance to respondents (Score of 2.41/4).
- Respondents indicated that opportunities to be **active** (57%), **beach access** (45%), opportunities to **connect with nature** (43%), and **environmental protection** (40%) are their main priorities for parks in Electoral Area C.
- Respondents indicated that **hiking and walking** (80%), trail **signage** (55%), **improved trail connections to other parks and trails** (37%), **mountain bike trails** (36%), and **tourism opportunities for visitors** (33%) are their main priorities for trails and active transportation in Electoral Area C.
- More respondents were supportive of tax increases to fund parks and trails improvements than those opposed (59% supportive compared to 21% opposed). A fifth of respondents (20%) were neutral regarding increased taxation.
- When asked what else we need to know, many respondents commented on the need for improved signage, wayfinding, and information (n=10). Improved maintenance (n=9) and the importance of parks and trails to local tourism (n=9) were also commonly mentioned.

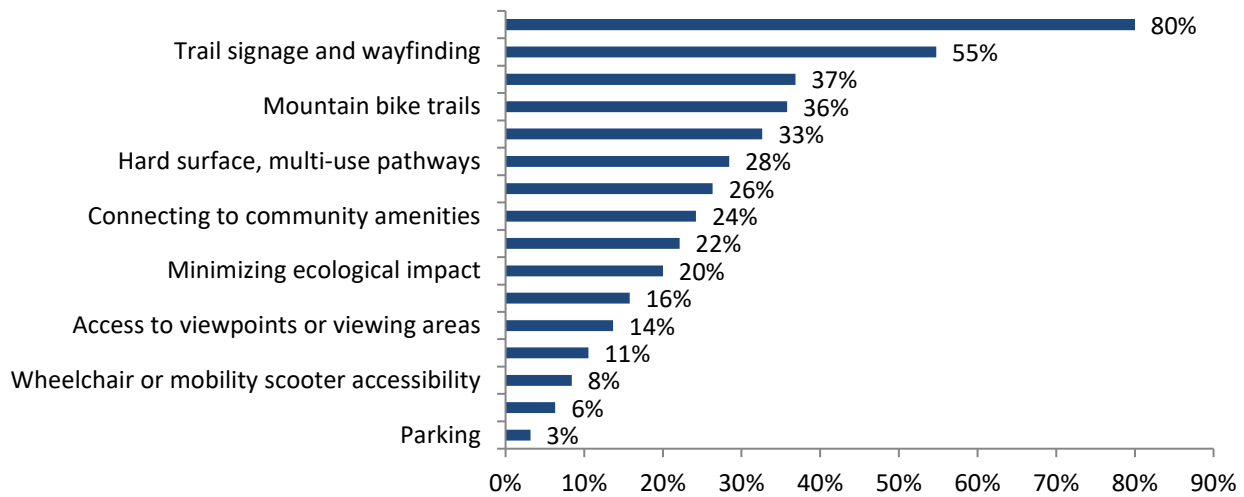
What should the RDBN prioritize in parks and trails over the next 10 years? (Rank options in order of priority).



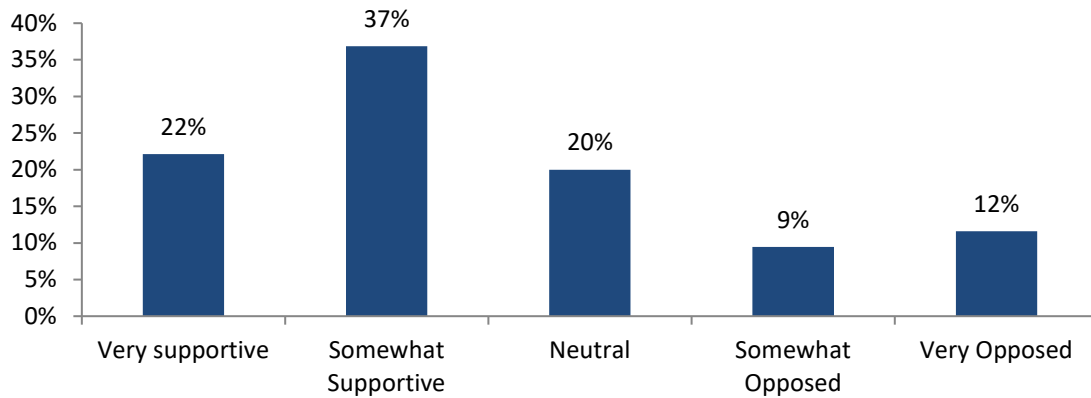
What are your main priorities for parks in Electoral Area C (Fort St. James Rural)? (Select your top 5)



What are your main priorities for trails and active transportation in Electoral Area C (Fort St. James Rural)? (Select your top 5).



How supportive are you of a tax increase to fund the acquisition of new parks and trails, or the development of new infrastructure in parks and trails?

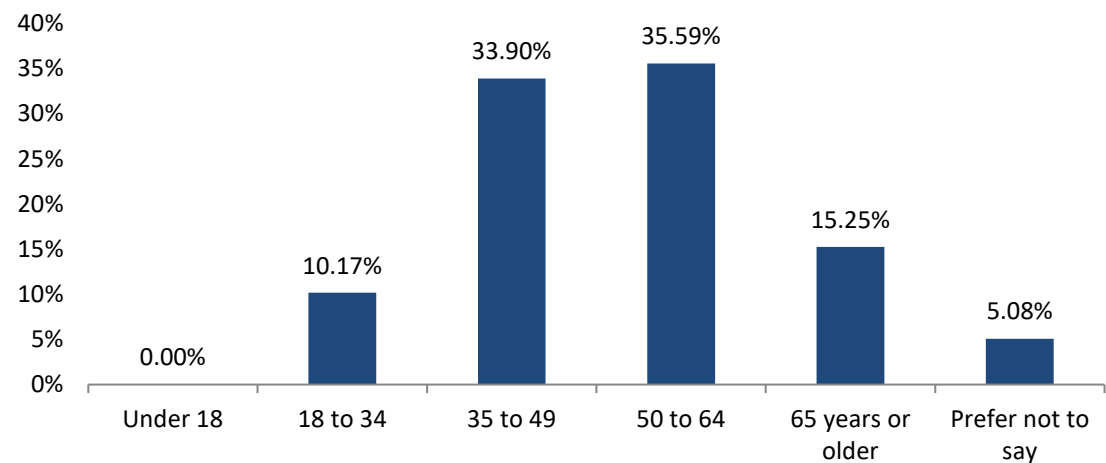


APPENDIX B: ONLINE SURVEY 2 SUMMARY

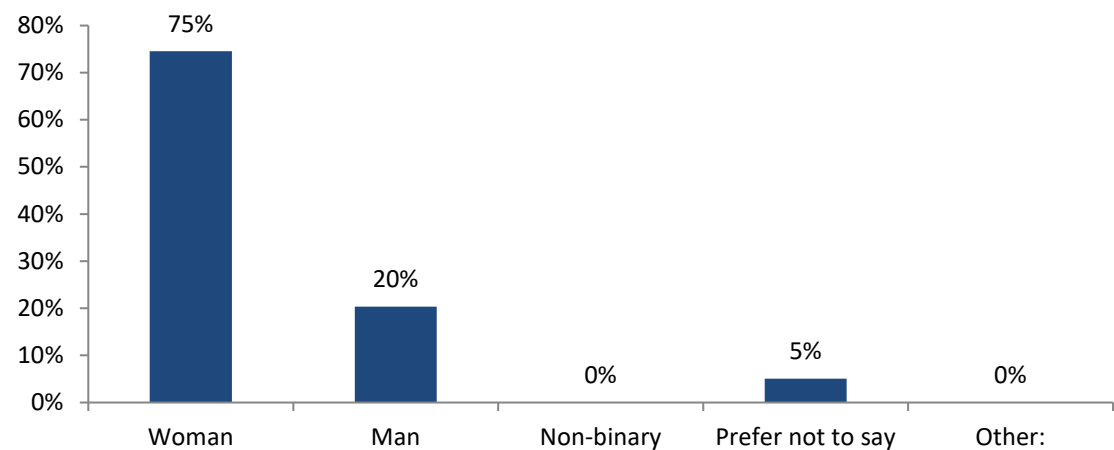
Who Responded

- The survey was completed by a total of 76 respondents.
- Most respondents were between the ages of 35 to 64 (69%).
- Most respondents identify as women (75%).
- Most respondents live in Rural Fort St James (up to 20 kilometers from municipal limits) (59%). The remaining live in the District of Fort St. James (29%) or in other locations, such as Vanderhoof (12%).

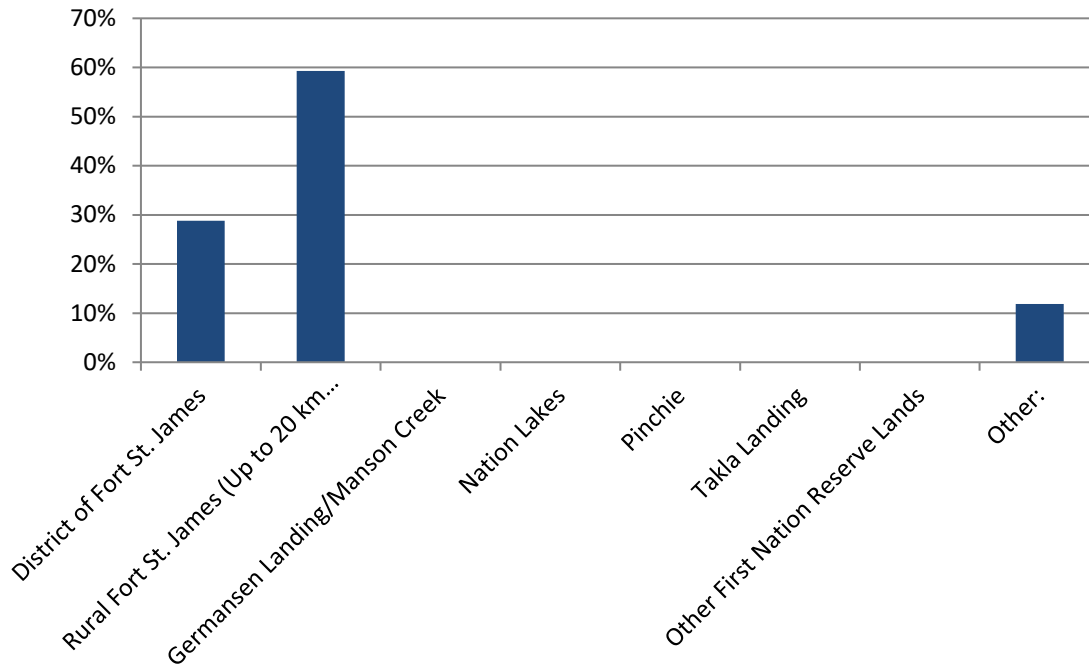
What age category are you?



What gender do you identify with?



Where do you live?

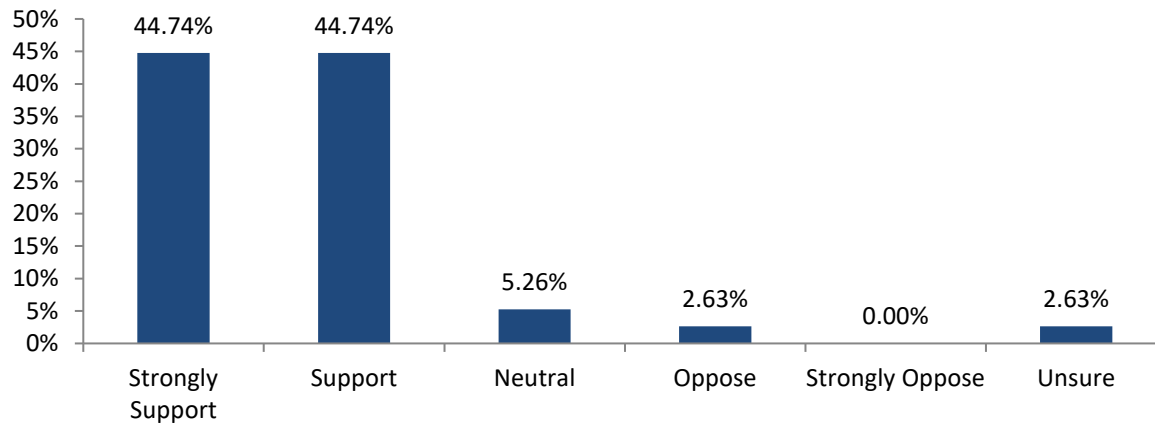


Vision statement

The majority (89%) of respondents support the draft vision statement. 19 community members provided suggestions on improvements to the vision statement including:

- Multiple concerns over vague language and a need for concrete objectives;
- Multiple mentions to recognize Indigenous peoples rights and title;
- Specific additions or upgrades to trails;
- Regional districts acting as a liaison between authorities;
- Emphasizing sustainability;
- Acknowledging safety and accessibility;
- Specific addition and maintenance of infrastructure (e.g. outhouses and signage); and
- Highlighting funding, regional collaboration and tourism, and detailed action plans.

To what extent do you support the Vision Statement?

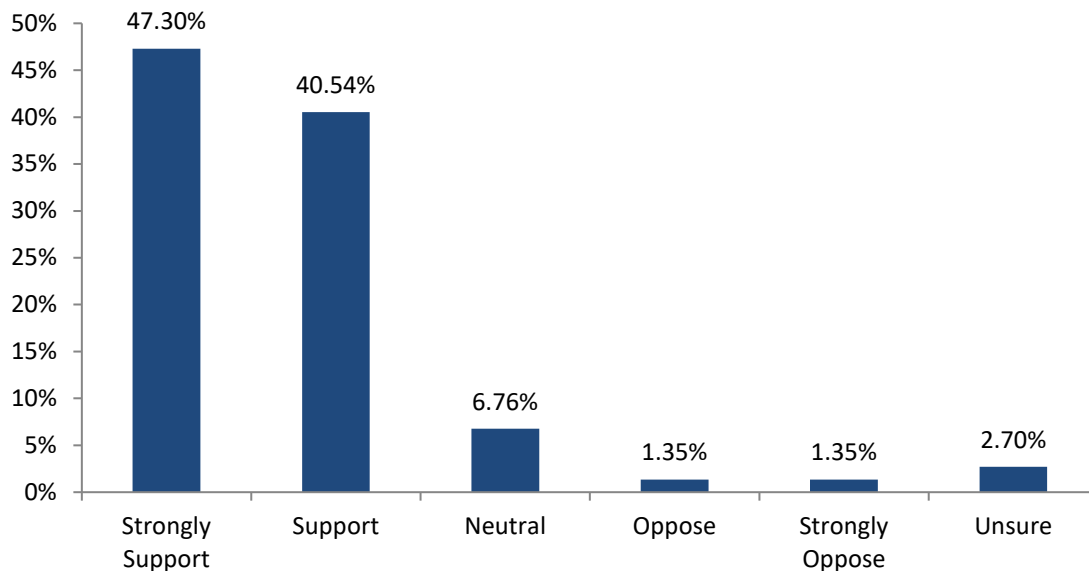


Five goals

The majority of respondents support the five goals (88%), and 19 community members provided further information on which goals were missed for parks and trails. Responses included:

- Multiple mentions noting the importance of goal 5 and moving to goal 1;
- Concern over the vague descriptions;
- Desire for goals mentioning maintenance cost, funding, tourism, and leadership responsibility;
- Adding language on accessibility, trail development, and land purchase funding as goals;
- Emphasizing safety, maintenance, recognition and consent from Indigenous consultation, ecosystem conservation, and expanding trail networks;
- Specific concerns about Sowchea Road safety; and
- Advocating for supporting and upkeeping existing recreation assets.

To what extent do you support the five goals?



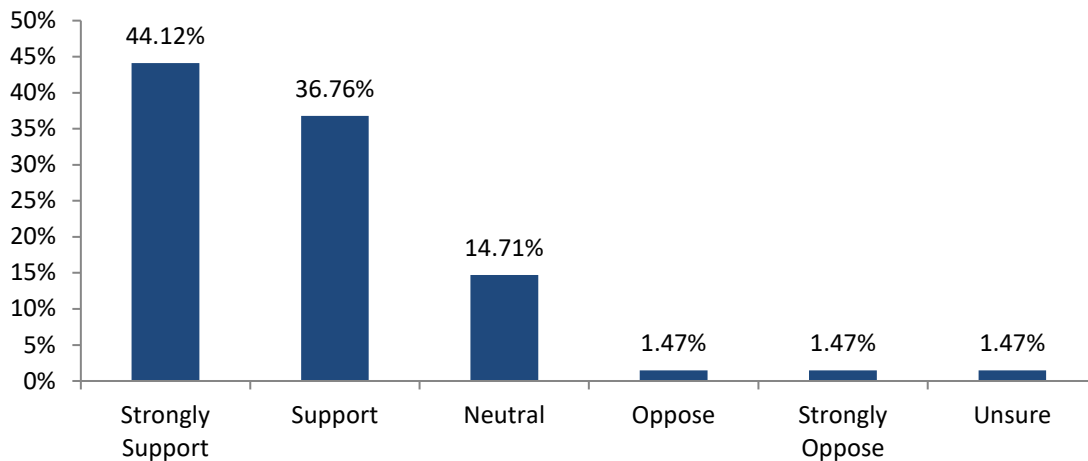
Support for a Trails Working Group

The majority (81%) of respondents are supportive of a parks and trails working group. 24 survey respondents elaborated on their responses, including:

- A need to acknowledge collaboration can also slow down the process with mention of clear leadership and concrete outcomes as important to its success.
- Mention of the benefits of working groups to drive maintenance and growth through permanent action but consideration is needed for long-term support.
- Desire for clarity on who will be in the group and desire for equal representation across organizations in the working group. Missing information on how this will be done and what is affected.
- Capacity for involvement: Current volunteers are mainly seniors and overworked; Region struggles with lack of volunteers, and the group could face difficulties with different schedules. Mention group members could get paid. Partnerships have the potential to ease burden on volunteers and create employment for local FN people
- First Nations: Would like to see 50 percent First Nation representation; require First Nations support, Indigenous involvement throughout the process
- Working group desires: Mention of priority to focus on improving accessibility and an overall desire for more funding.

- Concerns and limitations: Fear over the decline of local recreation opportunities with a desire for much more. Concern over town turning into park. Acknowledgement of both proactiveness and reactivity to the areas needs

How supportive are you of the RDBN helping to form a parks and trails working group?



Forming a hiking or mountain biking organization

Respondents were asked if they were interested in creating a hiking or mountain biking group, with access to funds provided through a Recreation Contribution Program. 35 respondents answered, eight of which noted they were not interested. Those interested or with further comments provided more details summarized below.

- A few respondents noted there are many active bikers and hikers in the community who would be interested, however limitations in distance, ongoing commitments, and time were identified as barriers to participation. One mention preferred a group supporting a wide range of recreation options, beyond biking or hiking.
- Some respondents mentioned they may already have a group, mentioning Stuart Lake Outdoor Group, or they are surprised there isn't currently a group, with mention of a desire to partner with Murray Ridge.
- A few respondents noted there is concern the volunteers are getting older and current volunteers don't want a dedicated organizational group.
- There were a few respondents who were interested in becoming leaders with a few contacts provided.
- There was mention that Murray Ridge Ski Hill and the fire department should be included and desire for an acknowledgement of the previous mountain biking groups dedication to creating existing recreational assets.

- An additional comment was presented that the Fort St. James Sled Dog Association was not mentioned in the report. They partner with the Fort St. James Snowmobile Club to maintain and enhance access, particularly on Stuart Lake. Respondent would like to see them given the opportunity for more input.

Prioritizing access to outdoor recreation

Respondents were asked to rank a series of priorities regarding priorities to increase access to outdoor recreation. The highest ranked priorities were to:

- Seek opportunities to support access to Mount Pope trails, T-caves climbing area, and improving amenities such as parking and washroom facilities (3.72/4).
- Explore opportunities to improve year-round access to Stuart Lake along Stones Bay Road in support of a non-motorized boating and cross-country ski trails on the lake (3.34/4).

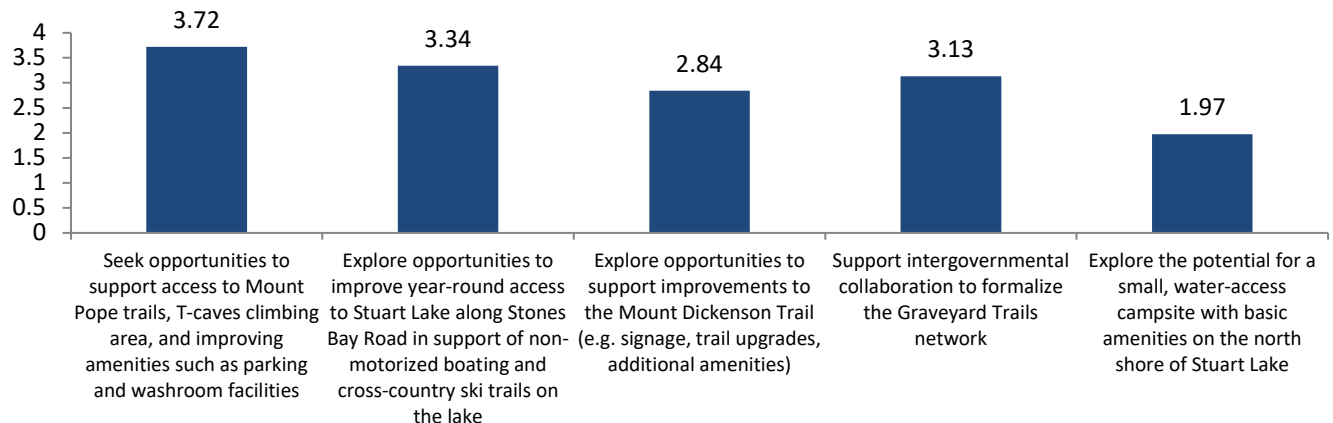
The lower ranked priorities were:

- Explore opportunities to support improvements to the Mount Dickenson Trail (e.g. signage, trail upgrades, additional amenities) (2.84/4).
- Support intergovernmental collaboration to formalize the Graveyard Trails network (3.13/4).

The lowest ranked:

- Explore the potential for a small, water-access campsite with basic amenities on the north shore of Stuart Lake (1.97/4).

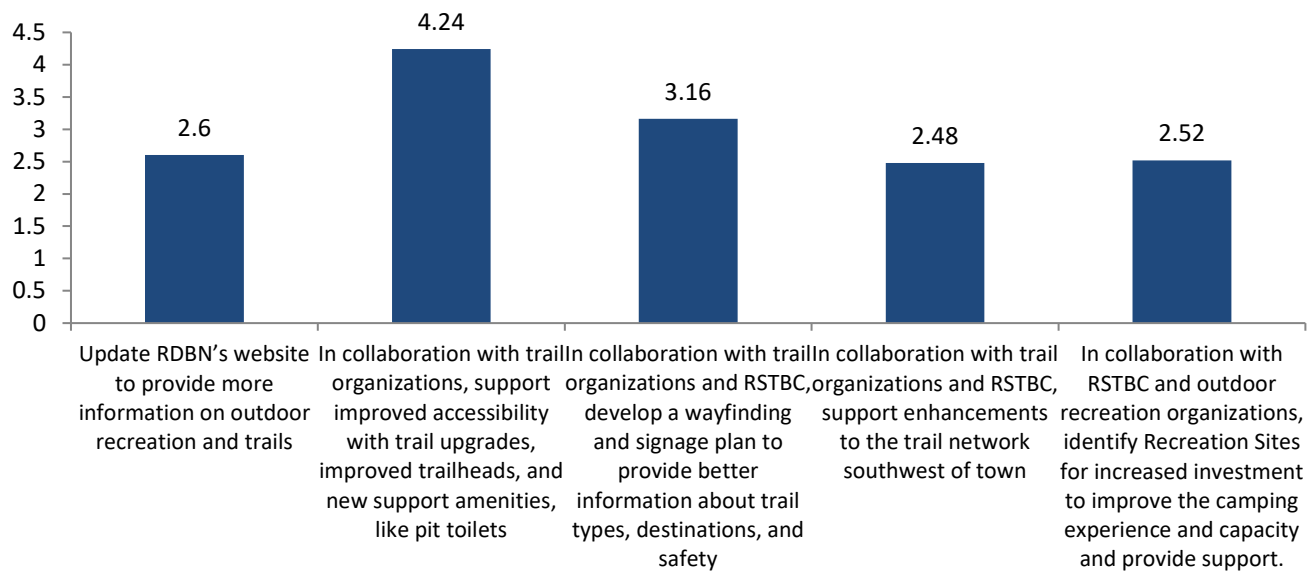
The RDBN's role in increasing access to outdoor recreation in Electoral Area C will primarily be through collaboration with other levels of government, land managers, and community organizations. With this in mind, which actions should the RDBN prioritize



Prioritizing the user experience of parks and trails

Respondents were asked to prioritize actions presented for Goal 4. Participants would like to prioritize improving accessibility in collaboration with trail organizations, including trail upgrades, improved trailheads, and new support amenities (4.24/5). They also prioritized developing a wayfinding and signage plan to provide better information about trail types, destinations, and safety (3.16/4.5).

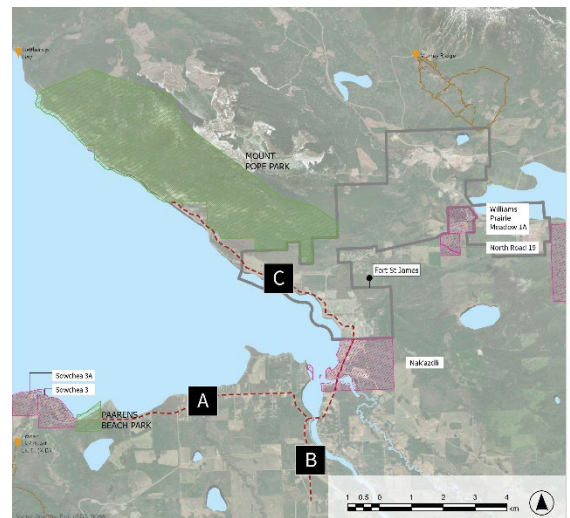
Which actions should the RDBN prioritize for Goal 4? Rank from highest priority to lowest priority by dragging the text boxes or by using the arrows on the right.



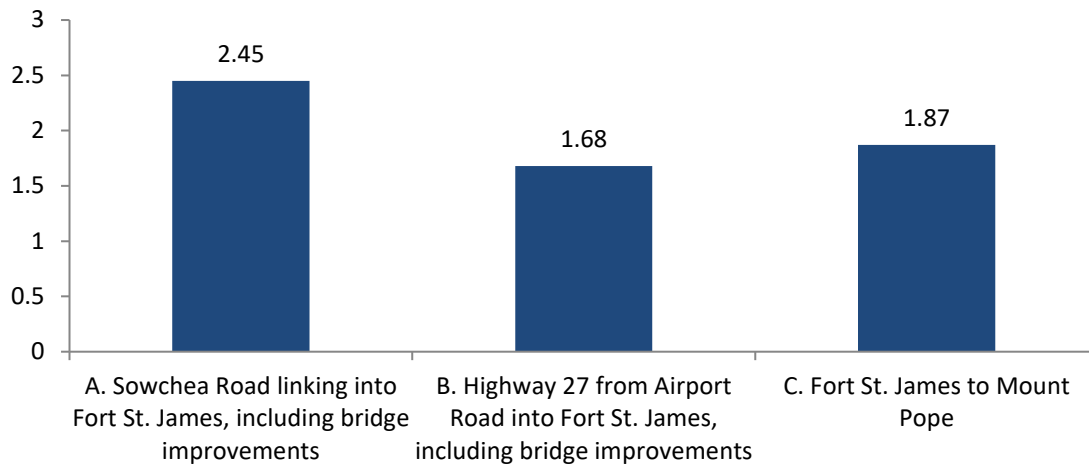
Prioritizing roadside trail connections

Respondents were asked to rank the trail segments from the highest to lowest priority to plan and fund connections with the Ministry of Transportation and Transit. Responses would like to prioritize Sowchea Road linking to Fort St. James, including Bridge improvements (2.45/3), as shown in the map to the left.

- A: Sowchea Road linking into Fort St. James
- B: Highway 27 from Airport Road into Fort St. James, including bridge improvements
- C: Fort St. James to Mount Pope



Three segments of roadside trail connections have been identified for Electoral Area C, as shown in Figure 1 below. The RDBN can support the planning and funding of these connections, including coordination with the Ministry of Transportation and Transit.



Additional comments

32 respondents shared further comments on the Draft Parks and Trails Master Plan. Common themes included:

- Multiple comments stressing the importance of meaningful collaboration with Nak'zadli and Dakelh peoples and concern over the lack of involvement in developing the Plan.
- Emphasis on accessibility and inclusion as a priority, including considering marginalized communities in the plan.
- Desire for support to existing organizations and acknowledgement of the work that unofficial groups have done on the trails. Lots of community desire to help.
- Widespread support for safer trail connections and linked trail systems.
- Desire to reuse and revitalize poorly maintained spaces (e.g. former forestry campsites, culturally, and historically significant locations).

APPENDIX B
MAP

RDBN Parks & Trails Master Plan
Electoral Area C

Parks and Recreation Sites Inventory

Final
June 2026

Client:

Consultant:

Scale: 1:1,000,000
(on 11x17 Inch Sheet)



LEES
ASSOCIATES

Legend

- RDBN Electoral Area C
- Reserves
- Recreation Sites - Electoral Area C
- BC Provincial Parks - Electoral Area C
- Lakes
- Rivers & Streams
- Municipality
- Major road
- Minor road

Note: There were no RDBN owned or managed parks, trails, or outdoor recreation amenities in Electoral Area C at the time of this plan.

BC Provincial Parks in Electoral Area C

- 1

BABINE LAKE MARINE PARK - HOOK (DEEP BAY) SITE
- 2

BABINE LAKE MARINE PARK - SANDPOINT SITE
- 3

MOUNT BLANCHET PARK
- 4

MOUNT POPE PARK
- 5

MUDZENCHOOT PARK
- 6

NATION LAKES PARK
- 7

OMINECA PARK
- 8

OMINECA PROTECTED AREA
- 9

PAARENS BEACH PARK
- 10

RUBYROCK LAKE PARK
- 11

SOWCHEA BAY PARK
- 12

STUART LAKE MARINE PARK
- 13

STUART LAKE PARK
- 14

STUART RIVER PARK - LOWER SITE
- 15

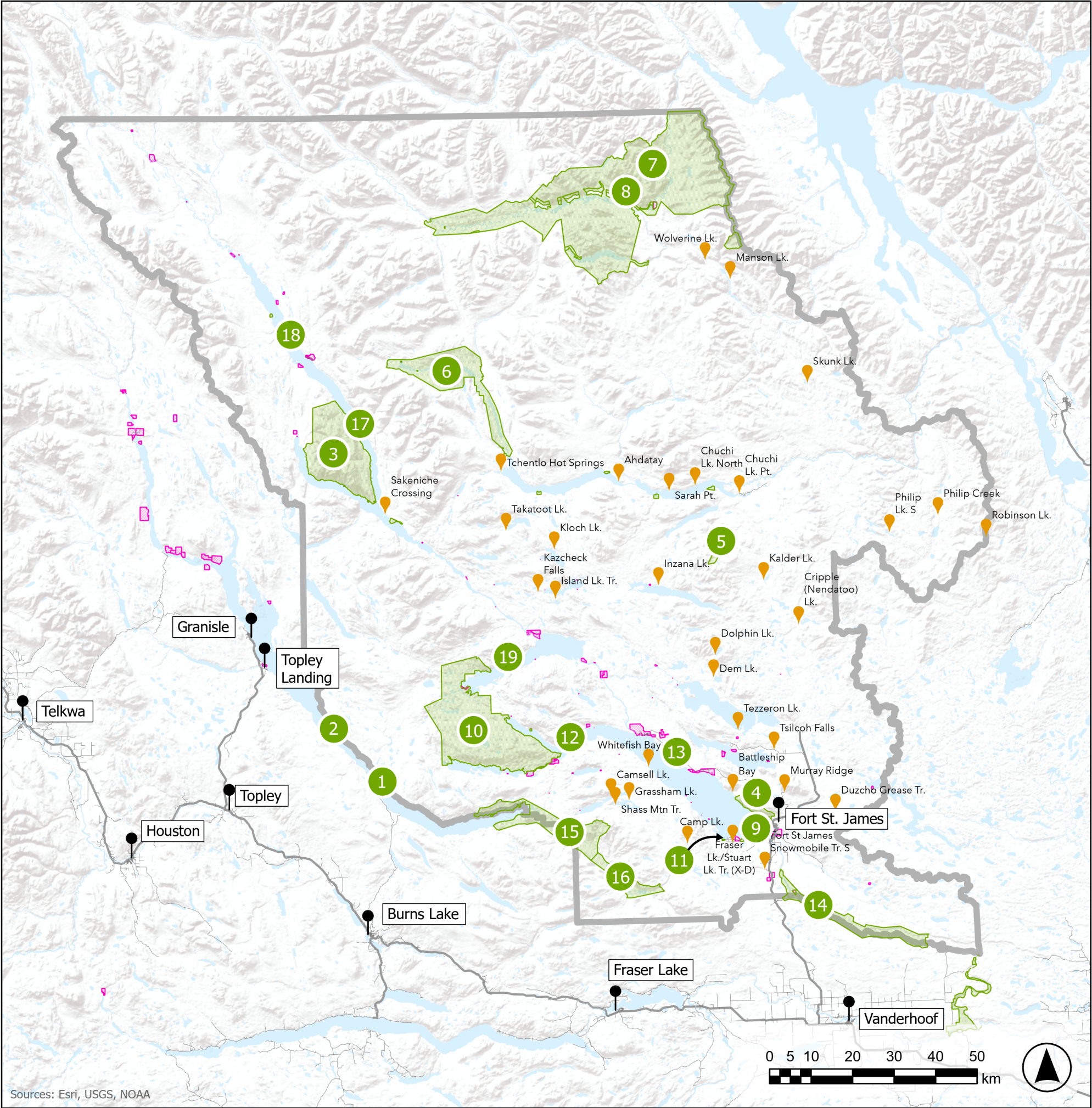
SUTHERLAND RIVER PARK
- 16

SUTHERLAND RIVER PROTECTED AREA
- 17

TAKLA LAKE ECOLOGICAL RESERVE
- 18

TAKLA MARINE PARK - TAKLA WEST
- 19

TREMBLEUR LAKE PARK



APPENDIX C
PARKS AND TRAILS INVENTORY

RSTBC Sites
Ahdatay
Battleship Bay
Camp Lake
Camsell Lake
Chuchi Lake North
Chuchi Lake Point
Cripple (Nendatoo) Lake
Dem Lake
Dolphin Lake
Grassham Lake
Inzana Lake
Kalder Lake
Kloch Lake
Manson Lake
Philip Creek
Philip Lake South
Robinson Lake
Sakeniche Crossing
Sarah Point
Skunk Lake
Takatoot Lake
Tchentlo Hot Springs
Tezzeron Lake
Tsilcoh Falls
Whitefish Bay
Wolverine Lake

RSTBC Trails
Duzcho Grease Trail
Fort St. James Snowmobile Trail South
Fraser Lake-Stuart Lake Trail
Island Lake Trail
Kazcheck Falls Trail
Murray Ridge Trail
Shass Mountain Trail

District of Fort St. James
Cottonwood Park & Cottonwood Marina
Municipal Campground (within Cottonwood Park)
Goodwin Park
Rotary Kiddie Park
Spirit Square Park

BC Parks
Mount Pope Park
Paarens Beach Park
Sowchea Bay Park
Babine Lake Marine Park – Hook (Deep Bay) Site
Babine Lake Marine Park – Sandpoint Site
Mount Blanchet Park
Mudzenchoot Park
Nation Lakes Park
Omineca Park
Omineca Protected Area
Rubyrock Lake Park
Stuart Lake Marine Park
Stuart Lake Park
Stuart River Park
Sutherland River Park
Sutherland River Protected Area
Takla Lake Ecological Reserve
Takla Lake Marine Park
Trembleur Lake Park