



RDBN Electoral Area C (Fort St. James Rural) Draft Parks and Trails Master Plan

Virtual Public Workshop
February 24th, 2026
6:30 pm

LEFS
+
ASSOCIATES





The RDBN Office in Burns Lake is located on the unceded traditional territory of Ts'il Kaz Koh, Wet'suwet'en First Nation, Nee-Tahi-Buhn, Stelat'en First Nation, and Witsset First Nation. While the office is in Burns Lake, the RDBN's work extends much further. 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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Agenda

- Project overview and timeline
- Role of the RDBN
- Demographics
- Current State
- Opportunities for Parks and Trails
- What we heard
- Vision
- Goals
- Questions?



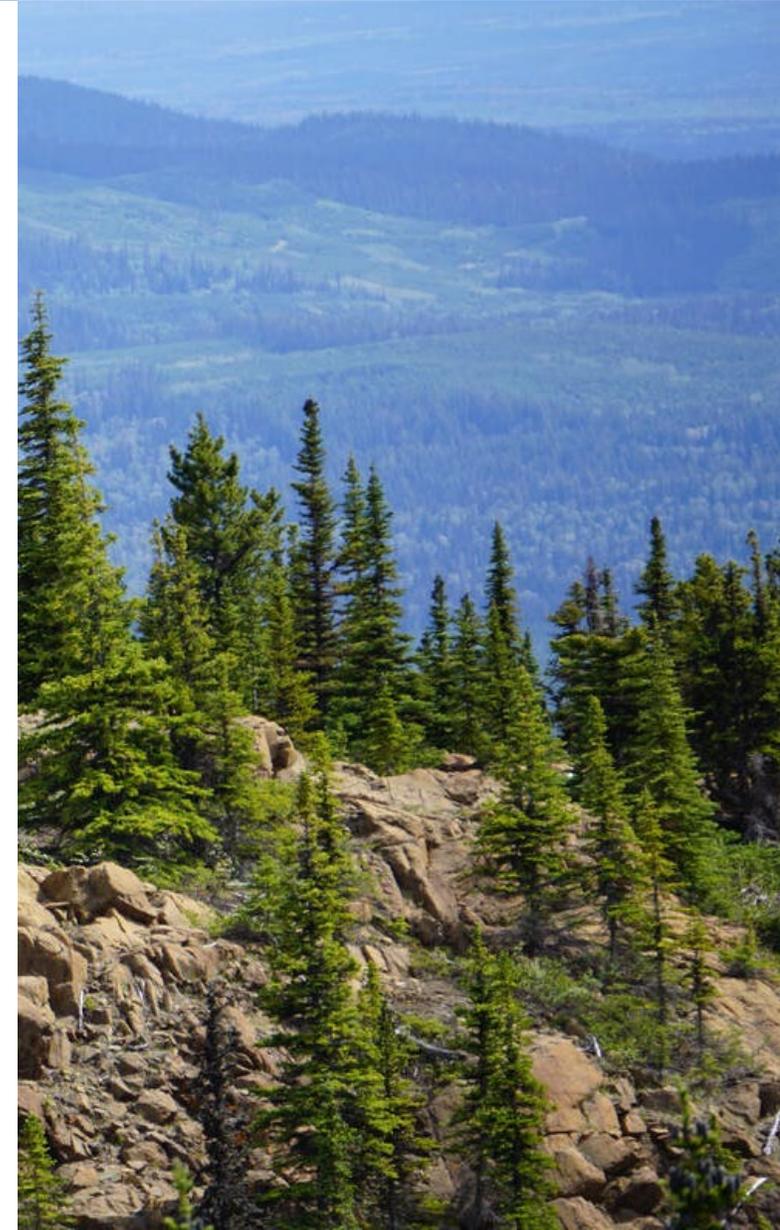
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Overview

RDBN's Parks and Outdoor Recreation Study identified the need for a regional parks and trails service and created four Parks and Trails Service Areas. In response, the Regional District is developing a Parks and Trails Master Plan for each service area. This plan is the first for Electoral Area C (Fort St. James Rural) and will provide recommendations over the next 10 years.

The Plan will:

- Build on the accomplishments of outdoor service providers
- Share a community vision and goals for parks and trails
- Develop cost-effective recommendations
- Outline key projects to address recreation needs



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Project Timeline



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Role of the RDBN

The purpose of the parks and trails service is to create, operate, and support parks and trails within the Electoral Areas.

This is the first parks and trails plan for Electoral Area C.

RDBN support parks and trails by:

- Continuing support for outdoor recreation organizations (Recreation Contribution Grant Program, Grant-in-Aid, Grant Writing Assistance)
- Collaborating with organizations and other levels of government
- Considering acquisition or securing tenure for trails, parks, or lake access points to be operated by the RDBN
- Leading or collaborating on trail and active transportation initiatives

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Demographics

- Electoral Area C is home to 1,266 residents (2021) with a decrease of 12% in population since 2016.
- First Nations on-reserve populations total ~1,300
- Slightly higher proportion of seniors (22%) than the RDBN and BC
- Lower proportion of youth ages 14 or younger (13%) than the RDBN
- 18% identified as having Indigenous identity
- 35 residents identified as visible minorities



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Service Providers

Parks Canada

Fort St. James National Historic Site

First Nations

District of Fort St. James

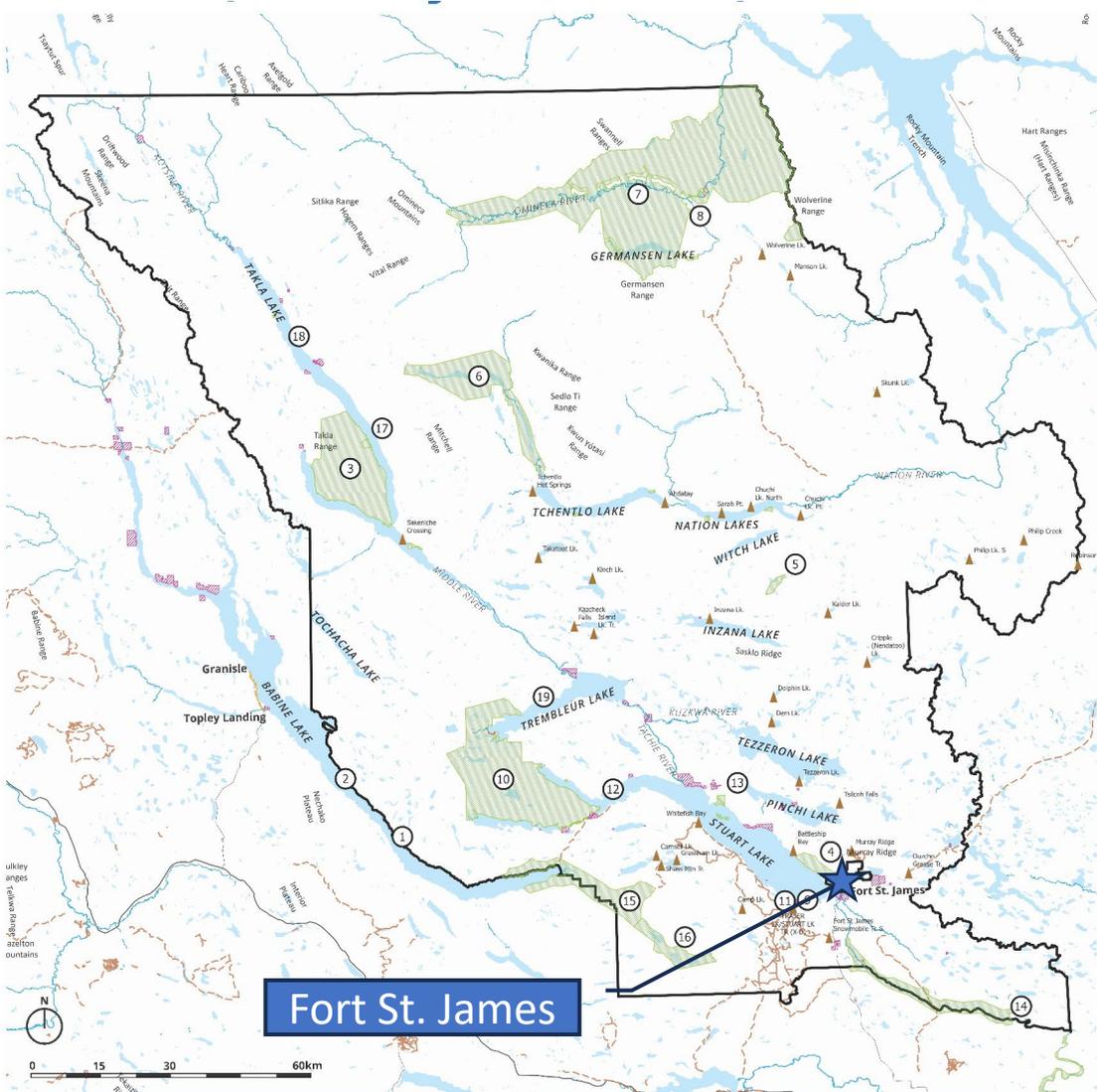
Godwin Park, Cottonwood Park, and Spirit Square, the walking loop, Mt. Dickenson

BC Provincial Parks

Including Mt. Pope - Nak'al Dzulh Park, Paarens Beach Park, Sowchea Bay Park

RSTBC Trails and Rec Sites

Many trails and campsites on Crown lands and maintained by RSTBC or user groups



BC Provincial Parks

- 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

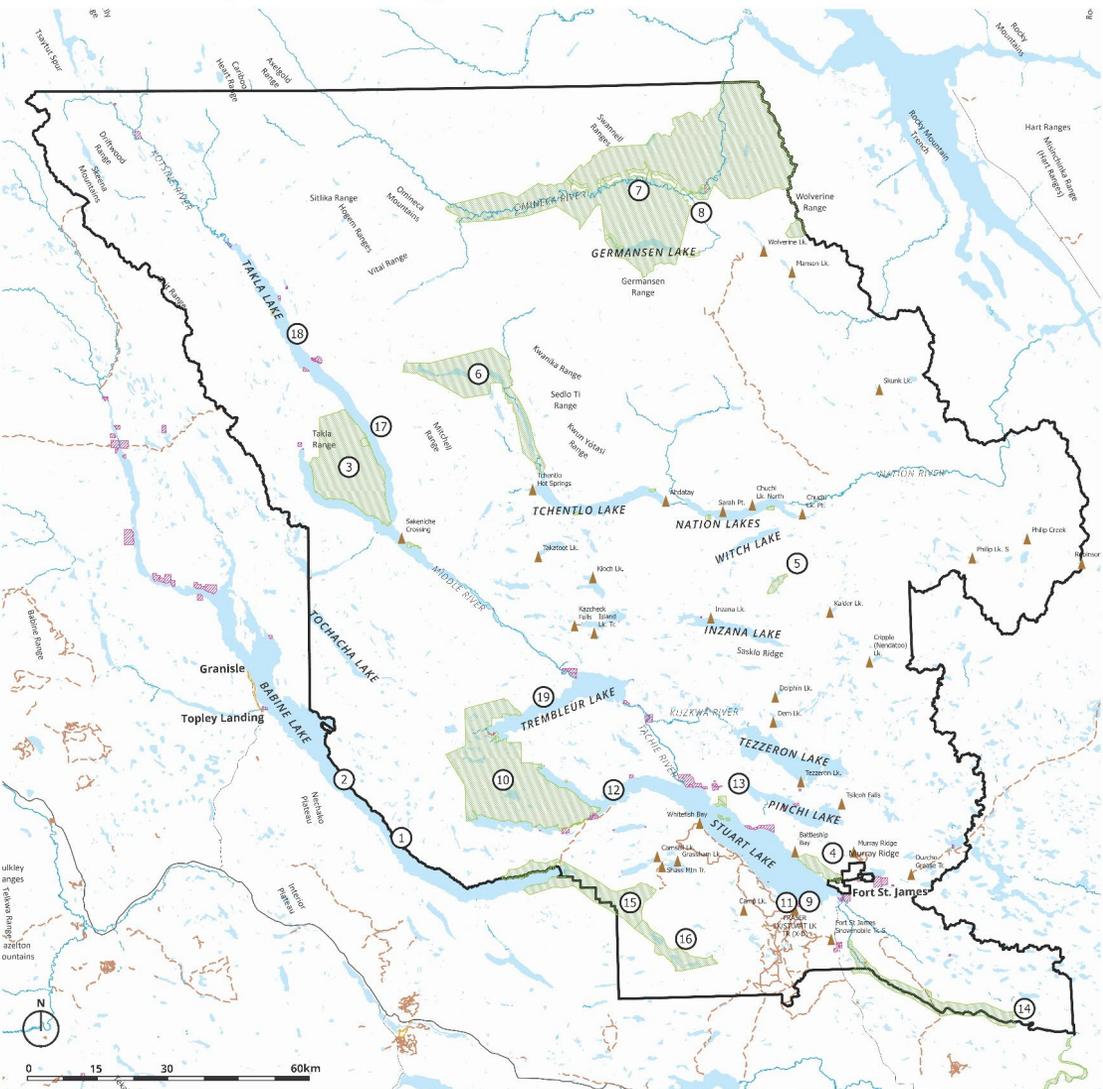
- ELECTORAL AREA BOUNDARY
- FIRST NATIONS RESERVES
- BC PROVINCIAL PARK
- LAKE
- RIVER OR STREAM
- ROAD
- BC PROVINCIAL TRAIL
- BC REC SITE

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Many Outdoor Recreation Organizations

Examples:

- Fort St. James Ski Club (Murray Ridge Ski Area)*
- Fort St. James Snowmobile Club*
- Fort St. James Sled Dog Association
- Stuart Lake Nordic Society*
- Private Campground Operators
- Stuart Lake Golf Club*



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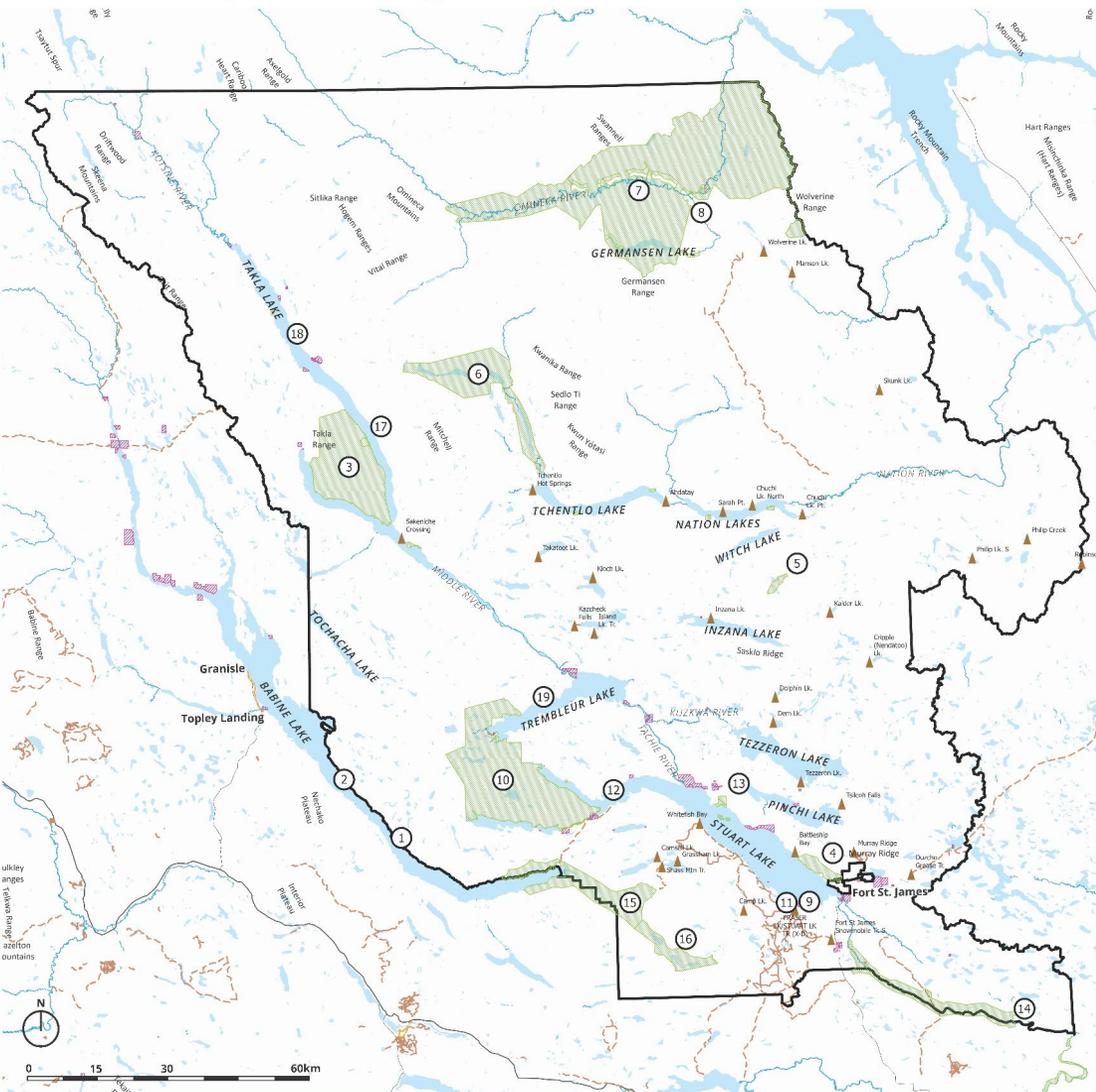
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Other Land Managers

Examples:

- Ministry of Forests
- Fort St. James Community Forest
- Ministry of Transportation and Transit
- Nak'azdli Youth and Recreation
- School District #91
- Private Industry



BC Provincial Parks

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Community Engagement

WHAT WE DID

- 1** public survey
- 1** community pop-up event
- 4** Virtual interest-holder workshops

PARTICIPATION

- 107** participants in the online surveys
- 9** participants in community open houses and workshops

First Nations

The RDBN reached out to **15 First Nations with Aboriginal rights or title within Electoral Area C to invite participation.**

As further input is provided, it will be integrated into the decision-making process.

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Key findings:

Top five activities include camping, a variety of water-related activities, festivals/markets/events, and downhill skiing

Current challenges include volunteer capacity challenges and securing trail access across private property

Top 5 locations mentioned include Stuart River, Murray Ridge trails, Sowchea Bay, and Paarens Beach



COMMUNITY VALUES

NEW TRAILS

Strong community support for creating and managing new trails.

ACTIVE RECREATION

Hiking and walking are top priorities, with a strong interest in providing opportunities to stay active outdoors.

MAINTAIN EXISTING TRAILS

Improving and formalizing existing trails is a clear community priority (e.g. Graveyard Trail system).

TRAIL ACCESSIBILITY

Better signage, wayfinding, and clear trail information are needed to improve access and usability.

INVESTMENT

The community supports increased funding, including tax increases, to improve parks and trails.

Opportunities for parks and trails



Improve existing parks and trails



Increase trail connections



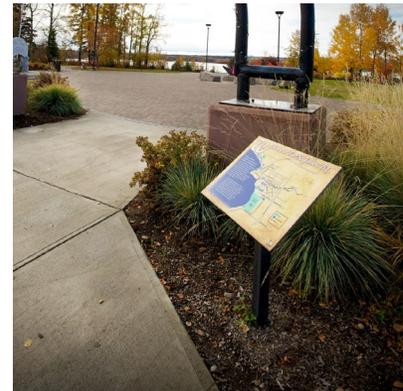
Provide more recreation opportunities



Improve accessibility



Provide more comfort amenities
(e.g., benches)



Improve signage and communication

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VISION

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

Build on community strengths

Support the creation of safe connections

Provide diverse + accessible recreation opportunities

Celebrate the region's natural beauty



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GOALS for parks & trails



Goal 1: Establish tools and processes to support the delivery of the Parks and Trails Service



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

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Goal 1 – Establish tools and processes to support the delivery of the Parks and Trails Service in Electoral Area C



Recommendation 1.1

Consider forming a parks and trails working group to bring together interest-holders to collaborate and share resources and knowledge supporting parks and trails opportunities.

Recommendation 1.2

Establish service levels for future parks and trails, including development of park management plans for future regional parks.

Recommendation 1.3

Consider adding additional staff to implement parks and trails projects across the RDBN's four parks and service areas.

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Goal 2 – Strengthen partnerships and build community capacity



Recommendation 2.1

Continue to build relationships with First Nations to prioritize protection and enhancement of cultural and ecological values.

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.

Recommendation 2.3

Increase awareness of the RDBN's capacity to support outdoor recreation organizations with administrative matters supporting grant applications and coordinating with other levels of government.

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Goal 3 – Increase access to outdoor recreation



- Recommendation 3.1** Explore opportunities to support access to Mount Pope trails, T-caves climbing area, and Stuart Lake
- Recommendation 3.2** Seek opportunities to improve year-round access to Stuart Lake along Stones Bay Road
- Recommendation 3.3** Explore the potential for rustic camping on Stuart Lake with a long-term goal of a paddling route around Stuart Lake
- Recommendation 3.4** Explore opportunities to support improvements to the Mount Dickenson Trail (e.g. signage, trail upgrades, additional amenities)
- Recommendation 3.5** Support intergovernmental collaboration to formalize the Graveyard Trails network
- Recommendation 3.6** Explore opportunities to partner with First Nations communities, local organizations, and tourism organizations to create a long-term shared vision for Grease Trails

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Goal 4 – Enhance the user experience at parks and trails

- Recommendation 4.1** Follow accessibility standards when establishing or upgrading regional parks and trails.
- Recommendation 4.2** Update RDBN’s website to provide more information on outdoor recreation and trails
- Recommendation 4.3** Develop a wayfinding and signage plan to provide better information about trail types, destinations, and safety.
- Recommendation 4.4** In collaboration with trail organizations and RSTBC, support enhancements to the trail network southwest of town
- Recommendation 4.5** In collaboration with RSTBC and outdoor recreation organizations, identify Recreation Sites for increased investment to improve the camping experience and capacity and provide support.



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Goal 5 – Support active transportation and a connected community



Recommendation 5.1

Explore opportunities to connect communities and key recreation assets through development of multi-use trails and pathways

Recommendation 5.2

Define the RDBN's approach to the use of motorized vehicles on trails and active transportation routes, including discussions with MOTT where needed.

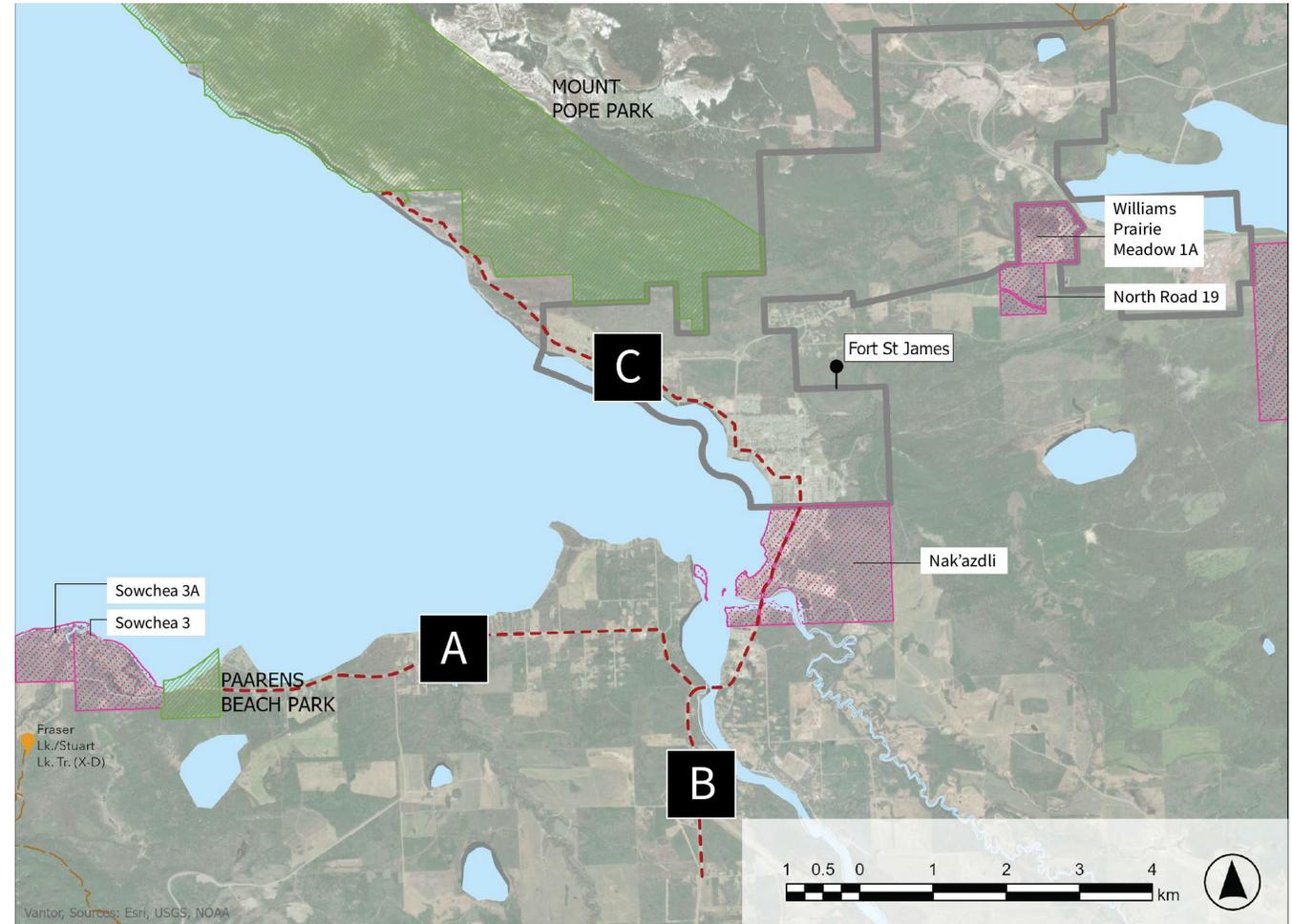
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Recommendation 5.1

Explore opportunities to connect communities and key recreation assets through development of multi-use trails and pathways

Three segments of roadside trail connections identified:

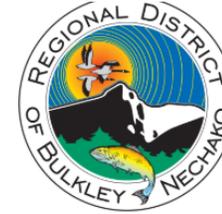
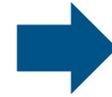
- A. Sowchea Road linking into Fort St. James
- B. Highway 27 from Airport Rd into Fort St. James
- C. Fort St. James to Mount Pope



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ONLINE SURVEY

Take the five-minute survey on the **draft Master Plan's** vision, goals, and recommendations to shape the future of parks and trails in Electoral Area C.



The survey will close on **March 23rd, 2026.**

Please share the survey across your network!

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/RDBNparksandtrails>



RDBN – Electoral Area C (Fort St. James Rural) Draft Parks and Trails Master Plan Survey Round 2

RDBN is developing a Parks and Trails Master Plan guiding the planning and management of the new parks and trail services over the next 10 years. The plan will reflect the unique character, culture, and geography of our region while building on the strengths of existing outdoor recreation service providers. The Master Plan will:

- Clarify the Regional District's role in providing parks and trails services;
- Establish a clear community vision and goals for parks and trails; and,
- Recommend key actions to meet current and future needs.

The RDBN and consulting team have developed the Draft Plan based on community input and analysis of the current parks, trails, and outdoor recreation opportunities. The following survey asks for your feedback on the Draft Parks and Trails Master Plan's vision, goals, and recommendations to help shape the future of parks and trails in Electoral Area C.

The results of this survey will influence the final recommendations and priorities for the next 10 years.

The survey will close on **March 23, 2026.**

Next

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Project Timeline



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Questions?

A hiker wearing a light-colored jacket and a hat is walking on a rocky mountain trail. The foreground is covered in green vegetation and grey rocks. In the background, there is a dense forest of evergreen trees, and further back, rolling mountains and a valley are visible under a hazy sky. The overall scene is a scenic mountain landscape.

THANK YOU