



Cumberland Community Forest Park



Village of Cumberland

Interim Trail Management Strategy

May 2021

Cumberland Community Forest Park: Interim Trail Management Strategy

Forward: this *Interim Trail Management Strategy* provides trail management direction until a comprehensive Management Plan for the *Cumberland Community Forest Park* is adopted (completion date anticipated to be in 2022).

Village Approvals:

_____ Date: _____
_____ Date: _____

Acknowledgements:

This interim strategy has been prepared under the guidance of a working group composed of:

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A special thanks to this group for their time and commitment to this planning process.

Special thanks also to Tim Ennis, Comox Valley Land Trust, for his role final Strategy review.

This report was prepared by Kevin McPhedran, Manager of Parks and Recreation, Village of Cumberland.

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1. Introduction

The Cumberland Community Forest Park was purchased by the Village of Cumberland with funds provided by the Cumberland Community Forest Society (CCFS). The park is within the traditional territory of the K'omoks First Nation that has a long and diverse history associated with the area.

The park is home to a non-motorized, multi-use trail system that connects to trails outside of the Park. This trail system is made up of active and inactive resource roads and historic motorized and non-motorized trails that have developed informally over decades on land adjacent to the Village of Cumberland.

The evolution of these trails reflects the evolution of the community. Early settler roads and trails were used for mineral prospecting, mining, and logging for access to hunting, foraging, and fishing areas. Generations of dirt bikers and ATV users accessed higher elevations through old resource roads. Cumberland's municipal waterworks and watershed lands are also accessed through this area.

In the early 90's a small pioneering community of mountain bikers started building a new style of trails in the private timber lands adjacent to the Village. These unsanctioned trails created new opportunities for the community to access the forest, on foot and on wheels, and helped to inspire the creation of both the United Riders of Cumberland (UROK) and the Cumberland Community Forest Society (CCFS).

Connectivity is one of the strengths of the system, but it also poses unique management challenges. Mountain bikers, hikers, runners, dog walkers, school groups and day cares all use the park for recreation, education and connection to nature. The park is also the primary portal of entry and exit to the upper areas of the Cumberland Trail Network (*Access Agreement Areas*) and receives a significant amount of traffic accessing those lands.

Over approximately the past 20 years, the community has witnessed significant population growth, an increase in outdoor recreation activity by residents, an influx of trail-based tourism, increased interest in conservation, and the development of outdoor nature education programs. As a result, trail use has increased; however, a formal trail designation planning process has not occurred, leading to a lack of clarity on such topics trail use, right-of-way, etiquette, and social conflicts between trail users.

The CCFS formed in 2000 by residents of the Village concerned about imminent logging plans adjacent to the community and its impact on both the trail system and natural features. In 2004 and 2005 the CCFS provided the funds to the Village to purchase 72 ha and protected the lands with a conservation covenant held by the Comox

Valley Land Trust. The covenant focuses on ecological conservation, low impact recreation and restricts new trail development on the lands.

In 2016 the CCFS provided funding for the Village to purchase an additional 36 ha (“Space Nugget”). In 2020, a further 91 ha (“Project Perseverance”) was acquired under the same CCFS-Village partnership model. In late 2020, a conservation covenant was applied to the Space Nugget and Perseverance parcels. This covenant is jointly held by the Comox Valley Land Trust, the Comox Valley Regional District and the CCFS. The covenants are consistent in their intent: the lands are to be managed for ecological protection, watershed protection and low impact recreation.

The four parcels of land are now jointly known as the Cumberland Community Forest Park (CCFP). These lands are publicly owned, zoned under [Bylaw 1027 Public Use and Assembly \(2\)](#) and regulated by the Village’s [Parks Regulations Bylaw No. 840, 2007 – The Village of Cumberland](#) .

Concurrent to the expansion of the Cumberland Community Forest Park, UROC, the Village of Cumberland and private landowners entered into an Access (License) Agreement which formalized non-motorized access to an expanding network of trails on private lands outside of the park in 2015.

Marketing and public facing information regarding the Cumberland Trail Network has developed organically and has not been guided by specific parks and trail planning framework. This has resulted in a lack of clarity in communication messaging.

Meanwhile, participation rates in trail based non-motorized outdoor recreation have rapidly risen in recent years - a trend which has accelerated during the 2020-21 COVID pandemic. This increase in trail use has led to reports of a diminished user experience for some parks users, including an increase in trail conflict-related reports being received by the Village and other trail stakeholders.

This **Interim Trail Management Strategy** aims to address underlying trail related issues in the park by providing information and formalizing trail management policy by covering such topics as ownership boundaries, trail management roles, conservation principles, and trail designation, descriptions, and etiquette.

2. Intent Statement:

The intent of the **Interim Trail Management Strategy** is to inform management decisions to respond to high priority Cumberland Community Forest Park (CCFP) trail management issues until the comprehensive *Cumberland Community Forest Park Management Plan* is adopted (completion date anticipated to be in 2022).

This Interim Strategy acknowledges that future parks management planning will include broad community engagement on parks management issues that have significant community impacts, and/or that may significantly change patterns of use within the Cumberland Community Forest Park. In the meantime, this interim Strategy exists to:

- Build understanding about the CCFP and the broader trail network in Cumberland
- Initiate and coordinate responses to known current trail management issues.

This Strategy recognizes that, while the Village of Cumberland (“the Village”) has ultimate trail management authority over the trails in the park, there are benefits of aligning CCFP trail policy with United Riders of

Cumberland (UROC) trail policy for the wider Cumberland Trail Network (managed by UROC). Additionally, this Interim Trail Management Strategy, as well as all future land management planning activities, must be in compliance with the intent, restrictions and reserved rights as detailed in the three Section 219 (Land Title Act) conservation covenants registered on the lands comprising the park. The registration of the covenants on title was a condition in which the Village acquired the lands in partnership with the Cumberland Community Forest Society. Accordingly, the success of the Strategy is dependent upon working collaboratively with UROC and the covenant holders (including the Comox Valley Land Trust, the Land Conservancy of BC, the Cumberland Community Forest Society, and the Comox Valley Regional District) in Strategy implementation and communications.

3. Strategy Limitations:

The following topics are not considered in this interim Strategy:

- *Major changes to the design and layout of the trail network in the park. Any trail development project proposals of major significant will be considered during the Parks Management Planning Process.*
- *Policy regarding dogs., The current parks regulation shall continue to apply whereby all dogs must be on leash within the park.*
- *Policy regarding special events. Village of Cumberland Park Use Permits and associated policies and responsibilities apply for races, education programs, cultural events, story walks etc.*
- *Policy regarding school and outdoor education programs. *However - The CCFS is currently working with Cumberland Community School and outdoor education programs to provide curriculum kits and maps about the CCFP which will include trail designation and etiquette information*
- *Policy regarding e-bikes. This will be addressed during the Parks Management Planning process.*

4. Definitions:

Lands and Agencies:

- **Cumberland Community Forest Park (CCFP)** - the 200 hectare public park purchased with funds raised by the Cumberland Community Forest Society and owned and managed by the Village of Cumberland. As the portal of access/egress to the 'Access Agreement Areas', the park receives the highest volume and diversity of trail users in the network.
- **Access Agreement Areas** - private forest lands accessed through agreements between the Village of Cumberland, UROC and private timber companies
- **Cumberland Trail Network** - general name used for the trail network adjacent to the Village including both Access Agreement Areas and the Cumberland Community Forest Park
- **Cumberland Forest** - general name for the forests, wetlands and natural areas adjacent to the Village including both private and public land.
- **Coal Creek Historic Park** - name for the public park adjacent to the Cumberland Community Forest Park and the location of the historic Chinese-Canadian and Japanese-Canadian town sites.
- **Cumberland Community Forest Society (CCFS)** – a non-profit organization that raised funds for the purchase and negotiated the conservation covenants for the CCFP. The CCFS is a co-covenant holder for the Space Nugget and Perseverance parcels and has parks management plan approval authority
- **Comox Valley Land Trust (CVLT)** - a regional land trust and co-covenant holder for the CCFP. The CVLT is designated as the Primary Covenant Holder and is responsible for monitoring compliance with the covenants which it does annually, and for taking enforcement actions in the case of a breach of the

covenants. CVLT has parks management plan approval authority, and any activity the Village intends to undertake that is expressly restricted by any of the covenants requires the prior written approval of the CVLT in its sole discretion.

- **Comox Valley Regional District (CVRD)** - local regional district and co-covenant holder for the Space Nugget and Perseverance parcels. The CVRD has parks management plan approval authority for activities within the defined Watershed Protection Zone.
- **United Riders of Cumberland (UROC)** - a local mountain biking advocacy and trail management organization that manages the trails in the Access Agreement Area and provides contracted trail services to the Village of Cumberland for trail maintenance work in the CCFP.
- **Village Watershed Lands:** 230 hectares of forested land owned by the Village of Cumberland in the upper Perseverance and Cumberland Creek watersheds. Primary land management objectives are for the protection for community drinking water resources; secondary objectives include managing for low impact trail-based recreation.
- **Community Interface Zone:** transition zone between the Access Agreement Area and the Cumberland Community Forest Park where users are alerted to upcoming changes in traffic patterns and trail use density at appropriate locations.

Trail Definitions:

- **Multi-use Trail Network:** a trail network that provides opportunities for hikers, runners and mountain bikers and strives to be inclusive to meet the needs of diverse ages and abilities.
- **Multi-use Trail:** a non-exclusive use trail that is shared by mountain bikers, hikers, and runners. All users share the responsibility to make each pass a safe and courteous one. All users share the responsibility to ensure they have the ability to yield safely and with the least impact on the surrounding environment. Who yields is not exclusive to one user group or direction of travel.
- **Nature Trail:** A non-exclusive use trail that is designed for foot traffic and is intended to provide opportunities for observing, reflecting, and learning about natural and cultural points of interest.
- **Gravity Trail:** a non-exclusive trail where design attributes such as grading, alignment and presence of technical trail features impact user speed and response times for interactions with others on the trail. Foot traffic should yield to mountain bike traffic for safety reasons.

5. Guiding Principles

The Cumberland Community Forest Park is composed of four properties purchased by the Village of Cumberland with funds raised by the Cumberland Community Forest Society between 2005 and 2020. At the time of purchases, the Village and CCFP agreed to the terms of conservation covenants to ensure ecological protection and community access for low impact recreation. This interim trail management Strategy reflects the intentions of these covenant agreements.

Trails in the Cumberland Community Forest Park also form part of the larger Cumberland Trail Network managed by the United Riders of Cumberland. This interim Strategy recognizes the benefits of coordination in trails policy for the Cumberland Trail Network (i.e. both inside and outside the CCFP).

6. Strategy Development Process and Engagement:

This Interim Trail Management Strategy has been:

- ✓ Referred to and endorsed by the Cumberland Community Forest Society (CCFS) to ensure consistency with the objectives of the CCFS as the Community Covenant Holder in the 2020 Covenant. As part of their role as a Community Covenant Holder on the 2016 and 2020 acquired parcels for the Cumberland Community Forest Park, and as a reflection of their role in the acquisition of all the CCFP lands for the broadest community benefit, the CCFS supports the Village's efforts in management of the CCFP through engaging in, and contributing resources toward, Village led planning processes and the implementation of CCFP projects.
- ✓ Referred to and endorsed by Comox Valley Land Trust (CVLT) for consistency with CVLT-held Covenants, and specifically for review of and receipt of support in principle for the implementation of select trail projects outlined in the Strategy that will require future CVLT formal consent.
- ✓ Referred to United Riders of Cumberland (URO) for input and coordination of trail management policy with other areas of Cumberland Trail Network.

Management actions implemented in this interim Strategy are to be reviewed during the management planning process, and where necessary revised.

7. Trail Designation

The underlying philosophy of this document is that all trails in Cumberland Trail Network, both trails in the Access Agreement Area and the Cumberland Community Forest Park, are a shared resource. In keeping with this philosophy, **all trails within the Cumberland Community Forest Park shall be considered non-exclusive use for cycling and pedestrians.** Trails in the park are to be designated “multi-use”, where shared-use trail etiquette practices are to be followed. However, for further clarity, there are trails within the CCFP described as *Nature Trails* and *Gravity Trails*.

Factors considered in the description of Nature Trails include:

- Current and projected usage trends including school groups, young children and elders;
- To address safety concerns;
- Connectivity and proximity to the community; and
- Opportunity for implementation of interpretive signage

Factors considered in the description of Gravity Trails include:

- Current usage patterns by mountain bikers travelling at higher speeds;
- To address safety concerns; and
- Trail design attributes such as grading, alignment and presence of technical trail features that impact response times for interactions between trail users.

TRAIL DESIGNATIONS / DESCRIPTIONS

Trail signage shall be developed and installed to reflect designations and descriptions.

Nature Trails: A non-exclusive use trail that is designed for foot traffic and is intended to provide opportunities for observing, reflecting, and learning about natural and cultural points of interest.

- Mama Bear*
- Swamp Trail
- Tied Knot*
- Big Log*
- Perseverance Loop

*Part of the conversion to Nature Trail is the implementation of design changes, scheduled for 2021 subject to available resources, and review and prior written approval of CVLT.

Gravity Trails: non-exclusive trails where trail design attributes such as grading, alignment, and presence of technical trail features impact response times for interactions between trail users. Foot traffic should yield to mountain bike traffic for safety reasons.

- Orange Peels
- Knuckers
- DCDH
- Found Link
- Lost and Found

Multi Use Trails: non-exclusive use trails that are shared by cyclists and foot traffic. All users share the responsibility to make each pass a safe and courteous one. All users share the responsibility to ensure they can yield safely and with the least impact on the surrounding environment. Who yields is not exclusive to one user group or direction of travel.

- All other trails in the Cumberland Community Forest Park

Finally, this policy acknowledges that trail designation, layout, and management decisions can impact the way in which the community and visitors navigate network. Future planning should consider the trail network design, including assessment of access and egress routes to the broader network, and secondary impacts of trail network design such as parking, traffic, neighbouring parks, and other community values on the Village.

8. Trail Etiquette: Working in partnership with the Cumberland Community Forest Society and United Riders of Cumberland, the following trail etiquette shall be adopted and communicated to all trail users:

CUMBERLAND TRAIL NETWORK ETIQUETTE

The Cumberland Trail Network is a **multi-use trail network** shared by mountain bikers, hikers and trail runners of diverse ages and abilities. This network includes:

- The Cumberland Community Forest Park owned and managed by the Village of Cumberland.
- Village Watershed Lands owned and managed by the Village of Cumberland.
- Private Working Forest Lands with trails managed by United Riders of Cumberland.

EXPECT mountain bikes, hikers, runners, dogs, children, and elders on these trails.

Trails closest to the Village are part of the Cumberland Community Forest Park and the **Community Interface Zone (see map)**. The Park was gifted to the Village by the community for ecological protection and low impact recreation. These **multi-use trails** receive the highest volume and diversity of trail users.

Visitors are encouraged to pay attention to signage and watch for **Nature Trails** (best enjoyed on foot) and **Gravity Trails** (yield to mountain bike traffic) inside the Community Interface Zone.

For everyone to be able to enjoy the Cumberland Trails safely, users are asked to learn and practice the following:

TRAIL ETIQUETTE

- **Respect** other trail users. Be kind to one another. Smile and say hello.
- **Share** the network. It was created by and for the community.
- **Communicate**. Let others know you are coming with a greeting or bell ring.
- **Stay Alert** and anticipate other users. Trail features and sightlines impact response time.
- **Be Aware** of your surroundings and have all your senses available.
- **Stay in Control**, ride within your limits and be ready to encounter diverse trail users.
- **Be Prepared to Yield** to other trail users and pass in a safe, controlled, and courteous manner.
- **Make Space** for other users and avoid gathering on trails or at trail intersections.
- **Enjoy** the network and find a way to give back.

CODE OF CONDUCT

- Motorized vehicles are not permitted in the network.
- Be aware that all gravel roads are active resource roads with vehicle traffic.
- Keep your feet and your wheels on the established and marked trails.
- Respect trail closures and decommissions. Do not construct new trails or alter existing ones.
- Stay on the trail. Shortcuts and go-arounds cause erosion and trampling of vegetation.
- Pack it in and Pack it out. From apple cores to dog waste.
- Know the current trail conditions and weather forecast and plan accordingly.
- No fires or fireworks.
- Leave no trace.

PROTECT THE ENVIRONMENT

- Do not swim in lakes or creeks. These are all public drinking water sources.
- If nature calls, move away from trails or creeks, bury any waste, and leave no paper products.
- Stay on the trail. When letting others pass, avoid damaging trail side vegetation.
- Leave space for nature. Keep pets under control and learn how to manage wildlife encounters www.wildsafebc.ca

9. Community Interface Zone Signage

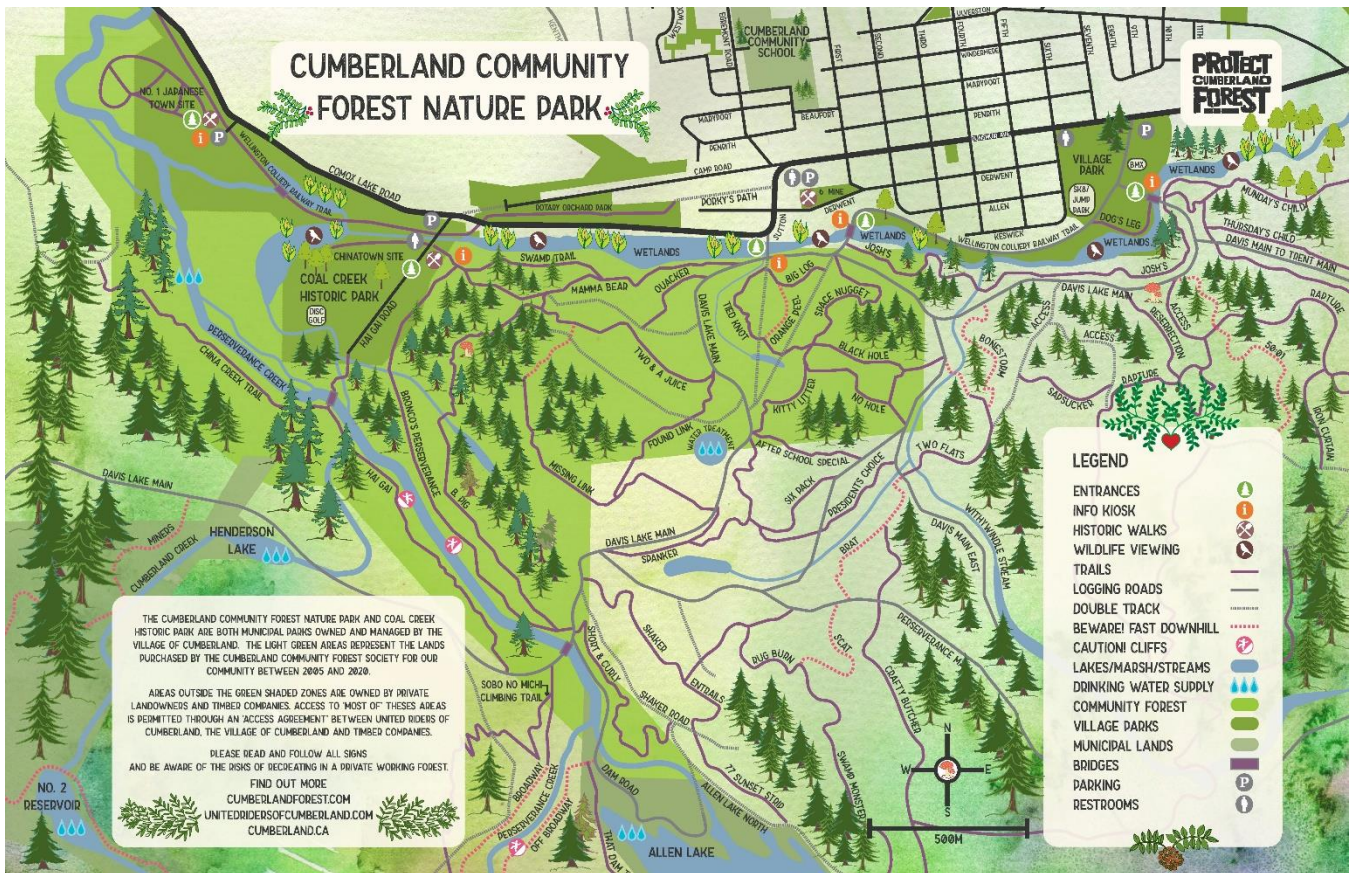
In recognition that there are Gravity Trails that are popular mountain bike egress routes from the upper trail network to the Village, safety signage will be posted to provide notice to users that they are entering the community interface zone and should be prepared to encounter diverse users and more traffic on the trails.

10. Trail Management and Maintenance Actions

	<u>ACTION</u>	
1	Update and/or install in network trail signage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Nature Trail ● Gravity Trail ● Community Interface Zone ● Park boundaries
2	Review trail network kiosk signage with UROC, the CCFS and CVLT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Where feasible, improve and enhance kiosk signage based on guiding principles of this Strategy. ● Work with the CCFS, UROC and CVLT to ensure their signage obligations are met ● Add basic dog etiquette/current parks policy to signage ● Update and improve mapping where practical, including posting the CCFS-created <i>Cumberland Community Forest Park</i> illustrated map.
3	Review and update external facing communications content to ensure alignment with the principles of this Strategy, working with UROC and CCFS.	Review to include online trail information sources (Cumberland.ca; UnitedRidersofCumberland.com; cumberlandforest.com, alltrails.com, discovercomoxvalley.com, Trailforks, advertising, print and social media, etc.)
4	Trail etiquette campaign	Partner with the CCFS and UROC on a trail etiquette campaign.
5	Trail maintenance and inspections	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Manage trail hazards and maintenance issues on a user-reported basis such as wind fall and technical trail feature condition reports. ● Respond to high-risk safety issues within 72 hours during peak trail season (April – October), and 7 days in low season (November – March) of report being received
6	Trail Projects	<p>Projects to focus on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● re-routes and trail improvements in response to environmental impact, safety, and performance issues; ● decommissioning of structures not required for water crossings; ● construction of new water crossings (i.e. bridges or culverts). <p>Projects on multi-use trails are to be designed and implemented for maximum benefit to all trail users. Hiking features (e.g. stairs) may be constructed on <i>Nature Trails</i>. Existing mountain bike features may continue to be maintained on <i>Gravity Trails</i> consistent with the</p>

		<p>Whistler Trail Standard trail difficulty ratings; however, no new mountain-bike specific features shall be constructed in the Cumberland Community Forest Park.</p> <p>Projects are to be implemented subject to availability of Village staff and financial resources, grant funding and contributions from community groups and their volunteers, including UROC and CCFS.</p> <p>See Appendix B for a list of priority projects.</p>
7	New trail construction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of 120m multi-use trail adjacent to After School Special. • Rotary Pathway to Recreation: approximately 350 m of 3m wide trail, surfaced with crushed gravel, including bridge crossing of Perseverance Creek. Subject to funding and all environmental approvals.

Appendix A. Map of Cumberland Community Forest Park / Community Interface Zone (to be updated to reflect content of Strategy)



Appendix B. Trail Projects

Trail	Project Description	Rationale	Preliminary Cost Estimate
Junction of Mama Bears and Swamp Trail	Re-route part of Mama Bears and Swamp Trail to improve layout, accessibility, and eliminate existing fall line alignment	To align with “Nature Trail” description	\$3000
Mama Bears	Realign and improve western trail head.	To align with “Nature Trail” description	\$2000
Mama Bears	Realign approximately 250m of trail to higher ground to mitigate impacts from existing trail location in wetland riparian area.	Reduce environmental footprint; improve user experience; align with “Nature Trail” description	\$6000
Space Nugget	Construct “foot traffic” bypass around ravine section.	To remove potential safety conflict between cyclists and pedestrians on “Multi use” trail, create “foot traffic only” bypass in section of ravine where cyclists may travel at high speed.	\$2500
Tied Knot	Construction of new creek crossings; decommission and repurpose existing bridges and TTF; trail re-alignments	To align with Nature Trail description	\$5000
The Pig	Realignment and construction of new creek crossings; decommission and repurpose existing TTF; trail re-alignments	To reduce environmental footprint (trail braiding); modernize trail layout and design; and implement “multi-use” trail planning principals	\$10,0000
Short and Curly	Trail re-alignment to bypass bridge nearing end of service life by re-routing trail,	To eliminate need for complex and costly stream crossing	\$6000

	including using Allen Lake access road		
Big Log	Construct new entry / boardwalk	To create separate trail (i.e. no longer share trail segment with adjacent Orange Peels Gravity Trail	\$6000

**Implementation of several of the trail projects outlined in this Strategy require prior written permission from the Comox Valley Land Trust under the terms of the Covenants on title for the properties. While the above project list has been reviewed by and received support in principle by the CVLT, formal written approval will be required by the Village prior to the implementation of select projects.*

End of document.