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STUDENT PROJECT

**Standard Operating Procedure and List of Recommendations for  
the  
WILLIAMS LAKE COMMUNITY FOREST**



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## **Part 1: Standard Operating Procedures (SOP)**

### **Purpose:**

The Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) are the draft agreed upon standards for the protection, maintenance and integration of the different uses and operations of the community forest. The SOP does not have legislative authority but its regulatory requirements has been based on the regulations required by legislative authority and by the Forest Range and Practices Act. The SOP has not included procedures for all conditions. In exceptional circumstances, additional modifications and concerns should be considered in the procedures and process.

### **Use of the Standard Operating Procedures:**

The management of the Williams Lake Community Forest and hired forest contractors should refer to these procedures during any field operations, construction or timber harvest within the community forest. These responsibilities must be upheld in order to ensure proper and consistent management of the community forest.

### **1.0 Skid and Bike Trail Crossings**

This section was based off the Forest and Range Practices Act (FRPA) Forest Recreation Regulation section 16.

### **1.1 Safety and Communication**

- The trail that will be affected by skid work will be posted as closed.
- A notice to commence letter (e-mail sufficient) will be sent to the District Recreational Officer and the Williams Lake Cycling Club to indicate when operations are active.

### **1.2 Creating Skid Trails**

- Any and all skid trails that cross a recreation trail will do so at right angles, and be limited to the minimum number of crossings required.
- The 50m x 50m landing will be as far from the trails as possible to ensure scenic/aesthetic values of the trail are maintained. The minimum buffer is 50m. Any motorized access opened by these skid trails will be covered with woody debris to deter unwanted motorized access to the trails.
- Post any trails for "industrial activity" to inform the public of industrial activity in the area. Rub trees shall be left at skid trail intersections and turnings. Rubbed trees can be removed on final pass.
- No skidding or access on or along the recreation trails except as specifically indicated within authorization to pursuant to the Forest and Range Practices Act (FRPA) Forest Recreation Regulation Sec 16 (a) (11).

### **1.3 Harvesting and Skidding**

- No skidding or access on or along the recreation trails except as specifically indicated within authorization to pursuant to the Forest and Range Practices Act (FRPA) Forest Recreation Regulation Sec 16 (a) (11).

- Timing – The proponent will ensure skidding across the trail is completed in frozen snow covered conditions.
- Trees that are below the trail and cannot be reached using one of the designated skid trails will be felled across the trail, the tops removed and the tree hauled across the trail, versus the skidder accessing across the trail.
- No skidding or access on or along the recreation trails except as specifically indicated within authorization to pursuant to the Forest and Range Practices Act (FRPA) Forest Recreation Regulation Sec 16 (a) (11).
- Developed stunts should be protected.
- Hand-falling and top skidding is to be avoided.

#### **1.4 Slash & Debris Management**

- Landings/burn piles adjacent to the trail are to be cleaned, reseeded as soon as possible post-harvest to maintain the aesthetic values along the trail.
- All debris will be removed from the trails past harvest.

#### **1.5 Deactivating a Skid Trail**

- Close off entrances to skid trails that are no longer needed to support industrial use where public motorized access may detrimentally impact trail values and cause use conflicts.
- Any motorized access created on or along the recreation trails will be covered by woody debris to deter unwanted motorized access to the trails.

#### **1.6 Post Harvest Inspection**

- A post-harvest inspection by the WLCF and the Williams Lake Cycling Club to confirm the trails are in useable conditions and to identify any deficiencies to be rectified by the Community forest will be completed.

#### **1.7 Maintaining Trail Values**

- If the trail tread is damaged due to primary forest activities the damage will mitigated or if significant will be restored.
- Minimize damage to natural vegetation along the trail to the extent practicable.

#### **1.8 Incurred Damage**

- It will be the responsibility of the Williams Lake Community Forest to repair any and all damage to any wooden "stunts" to the satisfaction of the Williams Lake Cycling Club.
- It will be the responsibility of the WLCF to repair any damage to technical trail features impacted by the harvesting operations, to the satisfaction of the Williams Lake Cycling Club.
- Any damage to the parking area at trailhead would be the responsibility of the Williams Lake Community Forest to repair.

### **2.0 Retention of Trees**

- When harvesting trees, the Williams Lake Community Forest will incorporate an average width of 50m buffer on each side of existing recreational trails to help maintain the aesthetic values and the integrity of the trails.
- Buffered trail locations will be reviewed and verified on the ground by tenure holders before actions are permitted.
- When harvesting is necessary for beetle salvage and pest control within the 50m buffer, the Williams Lake Community Forest will consult with the tenure holders to ensure the forest landscape is not significantly altered by the density of the harvest on case-by-case basis. The specifications agreed upon will be documented by a written consent of consensus by the tenure holders and the Williams Lake Community Forest.
- All and any trees that are harvested on trails will remain as a 10 to 15ft stump to ensure that recreational values of the trails are maintained.

### **3.0 Ditching, Culverts and Bike Trail Crossings**

#### **3.1 Safety and Communication**

- The Trailforks app should be used by contractors in order to know where the bike trails and logging roads cross. The safety of bikers where bike and logging trails intersect was not an area of concern by the Bike Club.
- In the creation of new ditches, smaller sized pallets for crossing would be preferable to prevent access into bike trails
- Ditches created must be feathered to make it less sharp in consideration of safety. The Bike Club has traditionally taken this task upon themselves and would be willing to cooperate and work together in the creation of new ditches
- A warning sign about 30ft away from where ditches are located in the intersection with access roads would allow ample time for bikers to be aware of upcoming changes in their tracks
- Use of Trailforks for updates regarding trails that might be affected by the creation of ditches to allow for precautionary measures by trail users, the app Trailforks is the most updated and reliable trail information available for bike users.

#### **3.2 Culverts and Water Flow**

Creation of water systems using culverts should take into account traditional water bodies and flow of water in the surrounding area as to avoid further ecological disturbances.

## **Part 2: Recommendations**

### **1.0 Communicating Closed Trails**

#### **1.1 Signage**

When BC Sites and Recreation requires that a bike trail be closed, the Williams Lake Community Forest and BC Sites and Recreation should work in conjunction to ensure signs are appropriately placed to communicate the closure of the trail to bike users. The signs should include a description stating the reasoning the closure and potential hazards that can be incurred. These signs and descriptions should be located at trailheads, kiosks and trail junctions.

#### **1.2. Contacting the Williams Lake Cycling Club**

When trails are officially closed, the reasoning for the closure should be communicated to the Williams Lake Cycling Club. The information can be further communicated to the greater community of bike users through updated posts on the Williams Lake Cycling Club website or Facebook page as well through the posts of individual members who may choose to share updates on the status of trails through the Trailforks app.

#### **1.2.1 Limitations in Compliance**

However, this communication does not guarantee that all bike users will be made aware of closures or will comply with the closure of trail usage. Trail usage will continue where trails have been established for a long time and where they act as key feeders in the network. However, where trails are redundant, bike users will be more likely to comply to the official requirements of trail closures.

#### **1.3 Physical Barriers**

Placing deadfall and logs at the trailhead and on the trail to help disguise closed trails is recommended. It is likely that if there is a physical barrier in place, such as a gate or a boulder, trail users will destroy the physical barrier to reopen the trail for their use.

### **2.0 Esler Bluffs Climbing Wall**

#### **2.1 Introduction and background**

The Esler Bluffs Climbing Wall exists in the western half of the Williams Lake Community Forest and has been in active use since the 1970s. The climbing area is self-managed by area users (rock climbers). This includes two main responsibilities including the construction of bolted rock climbing routes on all climbing walls and the upkeep of said routes as well as the maintenance of any existing infrastructure (trashcan, outhouse, picnic tables, and parking lot). The area users are open to possible tenure of the area. The shop “Red Shreds” has the map of the climbing area and routes.

#### **2.2 Existing Infrastructure**

As of May 2016, there is existing infrastructure within the Esler Bluffs Climbing Area. There is an outhouse, a trashcan and a parking lot as well as a variety of bolted top rope and sport

climbing routes. The structures that currently exist are sufficient for the current purposes of the climbing wall and the regular amount of traffic the climbing area receives. The general maintenance of the area is conducted by area users (rock climbers).

### **2.2.1 Trashcan, outhouse**

The trashcan and outhouse that exist in the climbing area were provided by the Ministry of Forests, Lands Resources and Operations, and put in place by Mark Savard. The washroom consists of a limited use recycled outhouse that was moved to the area by a fire crew under the supervision of Mark Savard. The trashcan is maintained and emptied by area users (rock climbers) as well as emptied by the Ministry of Forests. Trash and debris left in the vicinity of the climbing area is removed by area users (rock climbers).

### **2.2.2 Parking lot**

The climbing area is accessed via Hodgson Rd (Jeep Road) by motorized vehicles and via the Box DH Trail by non-motorized users. The parking lot is vital to the area but does not need to be expanded in size. A current estimation gauges that the parking lot can hold a maximum of 8 standard cars. This number is sufficient due to the limited traffic received by the area.

### **2.2.3 Recommendation**

The existing infrastructure in the area functions well and is sufficient for the current purposes of the climbing area. Area users are open to assessing potential tenure possibilities for some of the climbing routes that are present in the area to allow for protection. In addition to providing official recognition for climbing routes in the area, official signage supplied by either the Ministry of Forests or the Williams Lake Community Forest denoting the presence of the climbing area.

## **2.3 Increased accessibility**

The Williams Lake Community Forest has identified emergency vehicle accessibility to the climbing area as a concern. The safest point of access for emergency vehicles is currently via Hodgson Road which may need improvements if this becomes a priority. A 4x4 can access the area to within 300 meters where the road becomes too difficult to navigate. As of May 2016, an ambulance would be able to access the road but could not reach the climbing area, and would have to walk in further, or emergency evacuation would need to be coordinated via helicopter or an ATV.

### **2.3.1 Recommendation**

The Williams Lake Community Forest and the Ministry of Forests may work together in devising a plan for increased emergency accessibility to the climbing area as the Ministry of Forests currently governs the infrastructure in the area and may have an interest in allowing for a stabilized road to the area. In addition to a stabilized road, official signage provided by the Williams Lake Community Forest or the Ministry of Forests would be highly beneficial. The signage would denote simple directions along Hodgson Rd to allow for clear navigation.

## **3.0 Dumping**



### **3.1 Introduction and Background**

The Williams Lake Community Forest is currently dealing with problems of illegal dumping within its boundaries. The sites of dumping are often close to access roads and allow easy accessibility for residents to discreetly discard their unwanted residential wastes within the community forest. Additional dumping waste include abandoned stolen cars.

### **3.2 Signage**

The Williams Lake Community Forest should put up signs along the boundary of the community forest to indicate their ownership of the forest to the public. The signs should also include a warning and the penalty for illegally dumping within the forest. To further deter the public from dumping within the forest, the signs should indicate the close proximity, address, flexible hours and free price of the Williams Lake Transfer Station for residential waste under 450 kilograms. Wording can also use community-based social marketing, such as “We Need to Keep Our Forest Clean!” to imply the collective responsibility. The sign can also include contact information for the management of the Williams Lake Community Forest for more inquiries and concerns as well as the hotline for BC’s Natural Resource Violations.

### **3.3 Public Involvement**

The Williams Lake Community Forest should consider promoting community forest users to report any waste that is visible within the boundary of the community through the Natural Resource Violation form. This form can be accessed online through the BC Compliance and Enforcement Program webpage which will notify conservation and natural resource officers about the issue. Users can also choose to upload pictures to document what they have identified in the form.

### **3.4 Potential Partnerships**

The Williams Lake Community Forest should establish programs in partnership with the school district for educational purposes and potentially for helping clean up waste in the forest.

## **4.0 ATV Use**

### **4.1 Introduction and background**

The Williams Lake Community Forest has identified ATV use within the forest to be of high concern. Two similar areas of concern have been identified. These include the construction of bike trails that are unappealing to and will attract minimal ATV use, and improving ATV use prevention techniques on skid trails and bike trails.

### **4.2 Constructing Bike Trails to Minimize the Use of Motorized Vehicles**

There are a variety of potential bike trail construction methods that may minimize ATV access onto aforementioned trails. Bike trails can be constructed as narrow and technical, which discourages motorized vehicles from using the trails. Bike trails may also be constructed on a slope at an angle that would render them inaccessible to ATV users.

### **4.3 ATV Access Points**

The Williams Lake Community Forest has identified unauthorized bike and skid trail use by ATVs to be of concern. Skid trails allow for increased ATV and motorized vehicle access in areas that would otherwise not include paths or trails wide enough for a standard ATV. X number of strategies may be possible to minimize ATV use including: concealed access points, increased signage and the possibility of an ATV-only track.

#### **4.4 Recommendation**

##### **4.4.1 Concealed Access Points**

Bike trails may be constructed to be narrow and technical to prevent ATV access. Additionally, skid trails must be concealed after creation to discourage ATV access. They may be concealed using branches but this must be maintained as users may remove physical barriers.

##### **4.4.2 Signage**

Signage is recommended in the ecological restoration areas. The unofficial trail at the Cottonwood Draw ecological restoration grassland area needs to be marked, in order to keep the majority of users on the trail. It has been identified that the area is popular for families, who would likely be receptive to the sign and rules. This area is also an area of conflict as Bill Stafford's cows graze in the area. In addition, at the ecological restoration grassland areas, a sign could be put in place to educate users that the area is an ecological restoration area, and that users need to stay on the trail.

##### **4.4.3 ATV Use- Only Track**

While ATV access may be regulated with disguised trails and elimination of access points, it is recommended to create an area that is designated for motorized vehicle use to reduce the amount of trail conflict with the vehicles. ATV users are habitual in the tracks they use but if a possibility of a simple yet eventful and accessible track was presented it could attract the majority of ATV traffic away from sensitive areas. Some of the criteria ATV users would be interested in are a loop track with a clear midpoint for recreational activities, and a viewpoint. While ATV use is not desired within the Williams Lake Community Forest this would allow for containing usage to a given area, moving it away from sensitive locations (seasonal cattle areas and bike trails).

## **5.0 Westsyde Bike Trails Network**

### **5.1 Updated Layer**

The Williams Lake Community Forest will receive an updated layer of the Westsyde Bike Trails Network. The network lines obtained for this updated layer is downloaded with permission for the administration of Pinkbike through the app Trailforks. The layer portrays the currently used routes and trails by bikers but as the network is a living system that is constantly being reconstructed by users it will be difficult to keep up the layer updated constantly. This layer includes both tenure trails as well trails that have not been established through Sections 56 and 57. Thus, there remains some discrepancies between this layer and the legal network layer that Recreation Sites and Trails BC have in their dataset and manages. The Recreation Sites and Trails BC protects all trails within the Spokey Hollow Trail

Network. Any available information regarding the status of the trail have been included in the attribute table. Additionally, the difficulty of the individual trails have also been included in the attribute table.

## **6.0 Cattle Ranching Land Use**

### **6.1 Introduction and Background**

Cattle ranching and subsequent movement within the Williams Lake Community Forest has allowed for moderate conflicts to take place between stakeholders. Seasonal movement from spring ranching zone to summer ranching zone has taken place as a traditional habitual movement and the installation of a seasonal fence has helped delineate the different movement areas within the forest. The range agrologist coordinates specific movements within the different zones. Our limitations were that our group was unable to consult with the main cattle rancher in the Forest.

### **6.2 Recommendation**

Cattle ranching has various land use conflicts with other stakeholders. While none are vital for the movements within the forest they all overlap and it is necessary that all land use be understood by both the ranchers and the other stakeholders. Particularly, ramps (cattle guards) are necessary and favourable to allow for cattle movement within the Williams Lake Community Forest because they allow the existence of fences within given areas of the forest. Additionally, education of forest users about cattle etiquette and standard movements via signage would allowed for increased transparency. With a motorized vehicle area, it could possibly minimize the amount of vehicles in area of the cattle ranch.

## **7.0 Further Recommendations**

### **7.1 Increased Inter-stakeholder Communication**

Constant and coherent communication between all stakeholders and the Williams Lake Community Forest would allow for decreased land use conflicts within the WLCF. While a vast amount of communication already takes place regularly, to eliminate unexpected events or new challenges it would be beneficial for all parties if communication of activities and events was regular and standardized. The Standing Committee allows for a substantial portion of necessary communication to take place, however this is only sporadically and does not allow for representatives of all interested parties to be present. To include all interested parties regularly would allow for increased transparency and elimination of potential conflicts that may arise. Additionally, many consulted stakeholders requested increased public participation allowing for increased mutual respect and effective consultations.

### **7.2 Input from Trappers and Cattle Ranchers**

Input on an access management plan should be gathered from the local trappers, and further information from cattle ranchers.

### **7.3 Site Visit with Williams Lake Cycling Club**

Though the official buffer zone between skid trails and bike trails is 50m, Mark from the Cycling Club has identified this does not always need to be the case, and that it depends on the density of the trees. For example, in a densely treed area, a smaller buffer zone may satisfy the Cycling Club since the skid trail would not be visible from the bike trail and vice versa. However, in a sparsely populated area, a larger buffer zone would be better. It is suggested to either work on a case-by-case approach if the 50m zone is in question, and to establish an agreed upon acceptance of tree density by completing a site visit in the forest.

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