

**Chadburn Lake Regional Park**  
**Issues**

**To:** Darcy McCord  
**From:** Active Trails Whitehorse Association  
**Re:** Chadburn Lake Regional Park Issues  
**Date:** October 26, 2015

At the two City led walks (Chadburn Lake/Canyon City), it was suggested that the public inform the City of any issues that might arise with regard to the development of the Chadburn Lake Regional Park Management Plan. As well, it was implied that the City should be made cognizant of any information that should be provided to the public when the development of the management plan for the Park begins in earnest this November. It is with these suggestions in mind that our Association submits the following.

**Informing the public about what exists now:**

When the formal public process begins those taking part should be given an inventory of the trails that are present within the Park, along with an accurate map showing their location and length.

A map showing the environmentally sensitive areas located within Chadburn Lake Regional Park should also be provided.

**Informing the public about trail uses and types:**

Council approved the East of the Yukon River Trail Plan in January 2014. A map of the approved trail designations is found at the end of this document. (See page 6.) An updated version of the map should be made available when the public process begins for Chadburn Lake Park.

A list of the trails in the Park that have been developed from scratch by various organizations should be made available. It would be in the public interest to know the name of the organization, the names of the trails the organization has built, the intended uses of those trails (e.g. ski, bike), and if the organization maintains those trails. If the organization maintains other trails within the Park not built by them, then information should be provided as to the names of those trails, the type of maintenance being done, and who authorizes such maintenance. \* Most importantly for trail users, a list of trails on which technical structures have been placed (for example those for the use of freeriders\*\*) should be made available.

\*Any memorandums of understanding that organizations have with the City for trail maintenance within the Park and the actual wording of those memorandums should be made available to the public. The public needs to know who is doing what within the Park as far as trail maintenance is concerned.

Providing the above information will help create a framework to better enable decisions about future trail planning. This would allow us to determine whether or not more trails are needed, and if needed, what types of trails should be constructed. It would also help determine if some trails should be decommissioned, rehabilitated, or modified for changing uses.

### **Planning for future trail creation and maintenance:**

Park planning should incorporate the fact that “trail maintenance” has a different meaning for different users, even within the non-motorized category. For example, mountain bikers often prefer wider trails than do walkers. Hiking/walking trails do not usually have to have as many trees cut as their trails just go around or beside the trees. The nature of their activity does not necessitate wide trails, as the trail only needs to be as wide as the walker. As a result, walking/hiking trails are minimally invasive to forest areas, as users want to feel part of their environment. Existing walking/hiking trails require less maintenance.

Mountain bikers are more likely to focus on the trail in front of them as they ride downhill. In order to ensure a fast, relatively smooth, and safer non-stop route downhill, branches, rocks, and other “debris” are often removed. Walkers/hikers do not need such “maintenance” done on trails that they use, and may see such “maintenance” to be detrimental to their trail experience.

Another example of differing maintenance needs is ski trails. They may also need to be clearer of debris, and in some cases, be made wider than a walking or hiking trail.

Some existing trails in the Park may not meet typical environmental protection criteria as they have been built down steep descent routes on sage and grass hills, or on southern slopes which are important habitat for some plants and animals, or through existing game trails. In some areas, in order to prevent impacts to vegetation and animals, even walking trails may not be advisable.

New trail creation in the Park should be carefully controlled as it has a major impact on both plants and animals, and can detract from the overall enjoyment of the area by users. Protection of plants and animals must be of the highest priority as this is what the majority of users seek to enjoy when visiting the area.

Rogue trail creation and “maintenance” are already problems within the Park. The management plan must develop a process to better deal with these issues. This should include a more effective method of handling complaints made by citizens who report such activities.

For example, the City asks members of the public to call a Parks and Public Open Space Bylaw trouble line if a violation is observed with our parks. The person receiving the complaint should take the appropriate information, and then contact the department or departments that can deal with the matter rather than asking the

caller to take on that responsibility. As well, someone should get back to the person making the complaint with information as to how the issue has been addressed. The present method simply discourages people from making a complaint.

### **Planning for future trail uses:**

Although the East of the Yukon River Trail Plan designated motorized trails/routes within the Park, because of the way the Snowmobile Bylaw is written, it simply *asks* that snowmobile operators stay on those trails.

At present ATVs are not permitted on non-motorized trails or in green spaces within the Park. However, with the exception of the Magnusson ski trails and the Chadburn Lake ski trails, snowmobiles are permitted to use non-motorized trails and green spaces as long as they do not “damage any vegetation or ground.” Often, such damage is only detected once the winter season is over. The City needs to amend the Snowmobile Bylaw to rectify this situation.

Fat tire snowbiking is another use issue that should be addressed in the management plan. A potential conflict between user groups concerns the Contagious Mountain Bike Club’s desire to “groom” the Magnusson *ski trails* to allow snowbiking.

### **February 07th, 2014 (Public meeting on the Magnusson Trails) - The group resolved as follows:**

1. The Contagious Mountain Bike Club will rally its volunteers and "renovate" (or till) all Magnusson ski trails as soon as is practicable to make conditions safer and create a level playing field for the pilot project to be evaluated.
2. CMBC groomers will evaluate route options for grooming and forward a specific route recommendation to the City, who will in turn forward to this list for comment. In theory, CMBC will groom one loop, and leave another ungroomed (with exception of #1). They may even try a few variations of grooming treatment within the maintained loop to inform #3.
3. City will undertake to get feedback on Magnusson users' preferences and comments about the pilot project. We'll erect signage informing users about what is happening and why, as well as find a mechanism to advise people of when grooming is in progress. At the end of the winter, we'll review the results and report back to this group as well as the Whitehorse Trails and Greenways Committee for next steps. (Resolutions from the February 6, 2014 public meeting concerning the Magnusson ski trails, as per a February 2014 email received from Jane Keopke)

As far as our Association knows there has been insufficient effort by the City to get "feedback on users' preferences and comments about the pilot project." Nor are we aware of any “signage informing users about what is happening and why . . .” The public should be kept informed with regard to this “pilot project”.

This points to a key issue that should be addressed in the management plan for the Park, that being **communication**. A system must be put in place that ensures the public is kept informed about what is happening within Chadburn Lake Regional Park. Activities led by the City and by user groups should be made known to the

public. Better communication will result in fewer conflicts, not only between the City and its citizens, but also between user groups.

This could also result in better “event” coordination within the Park. For example, the Park is a popular area for trail running events that take place on Thursday evenings during the running season. If mountain bikers were made aware of the specific location and time of these events and asked to stay off the trails being used during those activities, then it would be safer for all concerned and less frustrating for runners (on a timed event). Mountain bikers also hold events in the Park during which time it would be best if they did not encounter other trail users. The same is true for the Yukon Orienteering Association.

Further to the topic of communication many trail location signs within the Park have longitude incorrectly placed before latitude. This should be rectified.

Another issue that will arise is trail designation. Some trail uses are not compatible. For example, freeriding\*\* does not mix well with other trail activities such as running, walking, or for that matter with other forms of mountain biking. Therefore, it may be safer and more practical to designate a trail or trails within the Park for this activity. These trails would be reserved for freeriding only. In other words, they would be single use trails, at least for certain times of the year.

It should be recognized that all users of the Park have some commonalities with respect to why they use the area. All want to be outside enjoying the fresh air. All recognize that using the Park will provide them with some form of exercise. However, there are differences in what each user group expects to experience when using the Park. It is because of this that conflicts may arise between those user groups. An understanding of those differences may help to create a better management plan for the Park and a better relationship between all Park users.

As a note to Park management planners, there is another possible motorized activity that may begin to appear in the Park, that being the use of timbersleds. Such vehicles could easily enter single-track trails, and may create conflict with other trail users.

### **Additional considerations:**

Process-wise, no new activities should be permitted, even as a pilot project, until the management plan is finished. Otherwise there is the potential for a precedent setting activity to occur that is incompatible with what is decided later during the Plan process.

**\*\*Freeride** is a discipline of **mountain biking** closely related to downhill **biking** and dirt jumping focused on tricks, style, and technical trail features. It is now recognized as one of the most popular disciplines within **mountain biking**. (Wikipedia)

The Magnusson *ski* trails should not be opened up to snowbiking until the subject is discussed during the management plan process, and a conclusion is reached as to whether or not the activity should be allowed at all within the Park. If it is allowed, then the public may wish to restrict the activity to particular trails, and to particular times of the year. Some parks do not allow mountain biking/snowbiking during the winter months. For example, Gatineau Park does not permit the activity from December 1 to May 14, probably to avoid conflict due to the fact that it has one of the largest networks of cross-country ski trails in North America.

Once created, the Park will continue to be exposed to degradation by its human visitors. Therefore, it is suggested that a volunteer park patrol be established. Those involved would have to be familiar with local bylaws, and with the Park management plan. They would have to go through some sort of training as to how to deal with people who may be violating either Park rules or City bylaws. Their presence alone could have a positive impact on all Park users.

According to the Regional Park Management Plan, “the City of Whitehorse is and will continue to be the lead administrator of Regional Parks. Planning and management will be the responsibility of various City Departments.” Further explanation is needed during the development of the management plan as to how this is actually going to work.

An “open house” should be held each year by the City to update all citizens on what has been achieved in the Park over the previous year, and to discuss the problems encountered in dealing with the goals of the plan.

**Summary of key recommendations:**

1. No new activity should be permitted within the Park, even as a pilot project, until the management plan is finished
2. Update and provide to the public a map of existing park trails, trail designations, and environmentally sensitive areas
3. Inform the public about current trail designations and trail maintenance processes
4. Rectify bylaw and trail use inconsistencies
5. Communicate with, and directly involve, citizens throughout the park management planning process

Active Trails Whitehorse Association looks forward to participating in the development of the Chadburn Lake Regional Park Management Plan. We hope that this input proves to be of some value in the process.

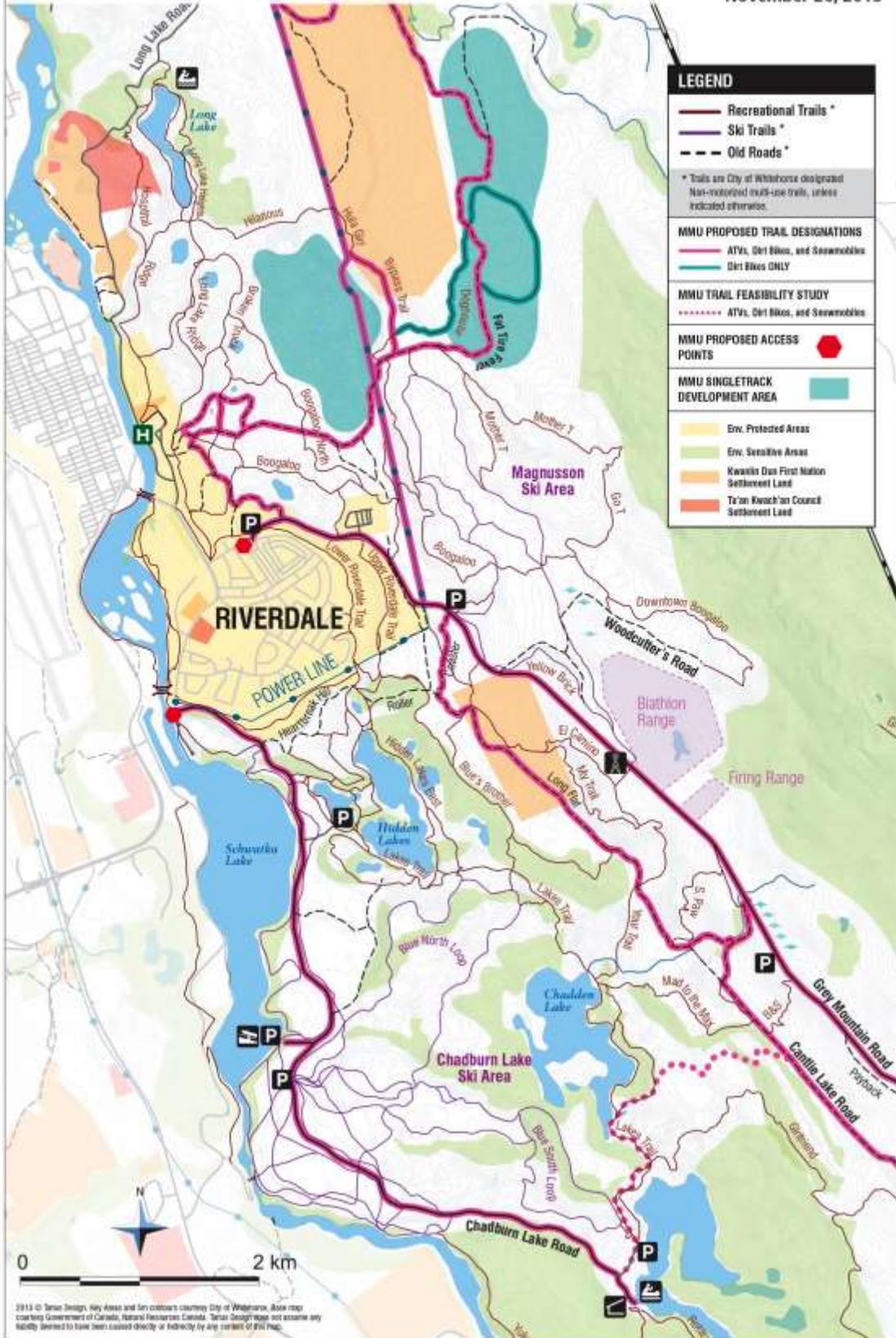
Yours sincerely,

Keith Lay (Active Trails Whitehorse Association) [www.activetwa.org](http://www.activetwa.org)

# East Yukon River Proposed Motorized Multi-Use (MMU) Trails

**MAP: EYR02**

November 26, 2013



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