

This is in response to your May 21 email below. See attached photos of trailhead signs taken at various locations between Riverdale, Hidden Lakes, at trailheads off the Grey Mountain Road and Chadburn Lake Road. These signs were installed by the city at various stages between 2014 and 2016. None of these trails are listed on the Snowmobile Bylaw 'excluded areas', yet all of these signs say, "motorized vehicles prohibited", and that includes prohibiting snowmobiles. Here is why these signs were installed.

EYR TRAIL DESIGNATION HISTORY:

Back in 2013-2014, I was a member of the Riverdale Trail Committee involved in the designation of trails for the East Yukon River (EYR) Trail Plan. I recall very clearly a January 2014 Riverdale meeting with city staff regarding EYR trail designation. The January 2014, meeting was organized by the Riverdale Community Association, after a year of public consultation about the EYR trails.

I attended that January 2014 meeting, as well as Riverdale Community Association board members, the Riverdale trail committee, and members of the public. City staff (Jane Koepke and Linda Rapp) presented the proposed EYR trail designation. I clearly recall that Jane Koepke said that snowmobiles would be barred from the Hidden Lakes area south of Riverdale encompassed by the 2 roads (i.e. Grey Mountain Road and Chadburn Lake Road) because those areas were mostly Environmentally Sensitive Areas (ESAs), and snowmobiles could hardly operate there without damaging vegetation or running into an ESA. On the other hand, snowmobiles could operate on the designated Motorized Multi-Use trails through that area, such as "The V", "Long Flat" and "Cantlie Lake Road", Grey Mountain Road, Chadburn Lake Road, the Upper Powerline Trail north side of Grey Mountain Road, and the Fat Tire Fever Trail. This proposed EYR trail plan was accepted and finalized by the City about a week later, in late January 2014.

Subsequently, the City installed several signs at trailheads in that area barring ALL motorized vehicles, between the years 2014-2016. See attached photos for examples:

- 1- The sign installed at Heartbreak Hill in 2014 (has recently been removed)
- 2- Pee Wee Hill (installed in 2014)
- 3- Hidden Lake #2, "Lake Trail" installed in 2015, also a similar one nearby on the "Loop Trail".
- 4- Upper Powerline Trail, on the south side of the Grey Mountain Road, installed around 2015

The city must continue protecting the Environmentally Sensitive Areas, and keep those "All motorized vehicles prohibited" signs in place. It is disheartening for volunteers who spent a lot of time and effort participating in public consultation processes to see that committee decisions are later ignored or forgotten by city staff. Confusion ensues, as well as environmental damage.

Please let's be clear about the reasons mentioned by Jane Koepke at that January 2014 Riverdale meeting for prohibiting snowmobiles from that area. It is a fact that snowmobilers often damage the vegetation on either side of narrow trails, which are prevalent in that area. Snowmobiles have been observed operating on steep trails where they spray gravel and bits of vegetation behind them, even in deep snow, as their tracks need to dig down to the ground for traction.

It's also a fact that snowmobilers are constantly veering off trail into open areas, which the Snowmobile Bylaw currently allows. This unfortunate practice means that in a place like the Hidden Lakes area, snowmobilers end up trespassing into ESAs, because most open areas there are ESAs. I have many photos of the damage they've caused in the Hidden Lakes areas. Just this past winter I again observed snowmobile 'high marking' tracks on open steep slopes in the Heartbreak Hill area, which are ESAs. That area is already used intensively by pedestrians, and there is a safety factor for prohibiting motorized vehicles.

(On a related note, it should be obvious that the Snowmobile Bylaw should be amended once and for all to restrict snowmobiles to motorized trails. That would end all the confusion and environmental damage.)

On the other hand, two designated EYR motorized trails never received the motorized multi-use signage at their trailhead at the Grey Mountain Road: "The V", and "Long Flat". We inquired with the city many times since 2014 as to why the motorized multi-use signage was not installed on those two trails, and never received a satisfactory explanation. Last I checked, "The V" trailhead is still blocked with concrete blocks. This discrepancy is no doubt disconcerting for motorized users. Just this past weekend I observed a quad operating on the Hospital grounds (prohibited to motorized vehicles), probably looking for a way to get to "The V" trail. This trespassing is a frequent problem.

To summarize:

A- The sign at the Heartbreak Hill trailhead should be replaced with a "All Motorized Vehicles Prohibited" sign, similar to the #5 photo above taken at Pee Wee Hill trail.
B- Please explain why the two designated motorized trails off Grey Mountain Road (the V, and Long Flat) did not get "Motorized Multi-Use" signs, and why "The V" is blocked.

Please note that I have been discussing this matter with Active Trails Whitehorse Association, and they may contact you about this.

Thank you for your attention to this matter, and looking forward to your response.