

**ACTIVE TRAILS WHITEHORSE ASSOCIATION
COUNCIL PRESENTATION
October 3, 2016**

On October 17th, City administration is scheduled to re-introduce its proposed changes to the recently updated (Feb. 09, 2015) Trail Maintenance Policy, changes that will tell rogue trail builders that constructing a trail without going through the required application procedure, will quite probably lead to the trail being approved by the City. In fact, if rogue trail builders come forward and admit their sins, administration will actually “[consult] and [cooperate]” with the rogue builder in order to turn the illegal trail into an official City trail. If City Council approves these proposed changes it will be falling into the trap set by rogue trail builders.

On July 21, Active Trails Whitehorse Association sent two documents to the Whitehorse Trail & Greenways Committee, and asked that its members review each of the documents prior to considering administration’s proposed changes to the Trail Maintenance Policy.

One of the documents illustrated how rogue trail builders use the “build first” approach to trail building in order to achieve their goals.

They start construction and get as much done as possible before the illegal rogue trail is discovered and reported to the local authorities.

Rogue builders know that it may take some time for the authorities to deal with the situation, as often funds are limited, and closure, rehabilitation (where possible), and monitoring of the closed trail all take time, money, and person power, elements that the authority may lack. This is often the case for jurisdictions that have extensive trail systems to maintain. Rogue trail builders count on these facts.

The builders anticipate that eventually someone will come forward and suggest completing and/or improving the rogue trail. That someone, will go to a local club or trail steward that promotes the activity for which the trail was cut, and either ask that club to go through the proper procedures to get permission to legalize the trail, or ask for the support of the club when he/she goes through the trail development application process.

When faced with an application supported by the club or trail steward, which often offers its help in completing and/or improving the trail, the authority involved sees “a way out” and approves the application.

If administration’s proposed changes are enacted as written, the rogue trail builder will obtain success whether or not they make themselves known to City administration. If they come forward the City will “[consult and cooperate] with them to “determine remediation requirements,” requirements that may well involve

the completion, improvement, and expansion of the rogue trail and its eventual legalization. If they do not come forward, someone else (a local club or individual) may take up the cause and go through the proper process to legalize the rogue trail.

It is a “win-win” situation for rogue trail builders, and only encourages the “build first” route that has proved so successful for such builders in other jurisdictions. Unfortunately, although a “win-win” situation for rogue builders, it is not for the environment, other user groups, or the community or land authority that has to bear the cost of such illegal activities.

City administration may indicate that in some cases it will not be able to afford the work required to return the impacted area to something approximating its former state. As well, it may suggest that it does not have the capacity to monitor blocked rogue trails in order to ensure they stay blocked and are not being used or expanded.

However, our City is fortunate in that it does have responsible trail stewards, (the Contagious Mountain Bike Club and the Klondike Snowmobile Association), both of which are often given permission to build and maintain trails within our City. These stewards should be extremely concerned with rogue trail construction and its negative impact on habitat, other users, the community at large, as well as with the possible legalization of such trails.

Indeed, the current Trail Maintenance Policy provides for “consultation and cooperation with local trail stewards . . .” The proposed changes expand this role to include rogue trails. Our trail stewards have the expertise and person power to help identify, block, rehabilitate (where possible) and monitor rogue trails to ensure they are not reopened. In doing so, they would demonstrate a commitment to the protection of our green spaces, to sustainable trail designation, and to our community as a whole.

Active Trails Whitehorse Association respectfully asks Council to carefully examine administration’s proposed changes to the Trail Maintenance Policy. We urge Council to reject the legalization of rogue trails, and to send a message to anyone contemplating such construction, that in our City rogue trail construction is not to be tolerated or rewarded, and that all such trails will be closed permanently with no possibility of future approval.

Thank you for your attention.

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