

Meeting with Daniel, Executive Director of Southern Vancouver Island Nature Trail Society

Jan 8, 2019

Attendees: Megan, Celeste, Daniel

About Nature Trail Society

- The organization was formed because of a need for a group to advocate for the idea of trails and support the various steps and authorizations required to upgrade existing pathways (that were not originally meant for trails), including the building of such trails.
- They are a bridge between land managers (such as the CRD, Ministry of Forests, private land owner), which tend to be resource-constrained and end users.
- Specific functions include things like getting approval from land managers, handling liability, holding insurance, discussions with unions.
- The organization builds new trails, or take existing pathways and brings them up to a certain level or standards for users (taking into account things such as sight lines, the 'way finding (?), markings, intersections etc).
- The organization negotiates trail maintenance contracts and does trail work for Langford and View Royal.
- They apply for grants – Mountain Equipment Coop (MEC), “triple shot cross fondo, apply for summer students to do promotion and marketing
- Have staff (ED) + trail building staff (3 adults & 2 youth). Finished a lot of the contracts and are hiring one other employee in the future

About trails

- Many folks want to segregate users (bicyclists, horseback riders, walkers, moms with strollers, dog walkers, mountain bikers). But have found that most users can get along quite amicably.
- Rail trails that are straight and wide (e.g. Lochside trail and the Galloping Goose) are common municipal trail because they're straight and wide. The trouble with these trails is that cyclists can get going quite fast, which causes conflict between different user types (dogs on telescopic leashes or kids on bikes)
- The organization has learned a lot about traffic calming on trails – building medians and roundabouts where the sight lines are interrupted slows all traffic down.
- There are guidelines for shared trails - IMBA (International Mountain Bike Association) has standards
- There is no one-size solution
- Need a fall zone – 2 M – make sure that there's nothing to fall on – particularly in difficult sections of the trail where people may be more likely to fall.
- The organization tends to create trails that are a single track but follow natural terrain. Trails are more natural and force people to travel at a slower pace and are more environmentally sustainable and economical.

- Love to show the trails we've built – the trails are meant to withstand heavy impact, including horses. The trails are built by first removing the top-most organic layer that acts like a sponge. The trail is then built up with angular rock and aggregate then capped with mineral soil that allows rain to penetrate. After the trail is built they bring back the moss and ferns to the trail's edge.
- Trails are sloped to allow rainwater to shed without making grooves or streams in the pathway. Trails usually not built straight up and down a hill or through low-spots.
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- Have found that split rail fencing corals people between roadways and paths
- An important first step in building a path is knowing how many users will use the trail – is it heavy usage (e.g. Mount Doug park)?
- The cost will depend on how 'tough' the trail needs to be built - \$30/metre for lighter trails and \$45/metre for heavier uses.
- Can estimate trail use by using a
 - Trail counter (CRD uses electric eye – how many times something goes by).
 - A magnet in the trail that registers when a piece of metal goes past
 - A game camera, but have found these are not very sensitive
 - Doing site surveys and usage counts
 - Google data?
 - **Action item:** consider doing analysis of Maber flats "Willow Way" as a potential count of the number of users. Ask CRD for use of their trail counter

Insurance & Liability

- The Nature Trail Society has 2 or 3 levels of insurance – Directors insurance, death and dismemberment for trail builders (staff and volunteers) and users insurance
- The Death & Dismemberment insurance covers the organization during the trail building period, as long as the organization has done their due diligence. Sometimes municipalities or BC Parks will want them to use their insurance
- For trail users – as long as we build and maintain trails to a standard (sight lines, signage) then land owners are covered should any trail users injure themselves.
- Occupiers liability Act – have received legal interpretations from a couple lawyers that as long as a trail is signed as a trail then the land owners is covered
- **Action Item:** Daniel to share with Megan and Celeste any documents/ information on these legal opinions
- The Society pays \$2,300/year for insurance (\$1,700/years for Death & Dismemberment)

Examples of building trails on private property

- The organization has several examples of trails going through private lands:
 - Bear Mountain
 - The 'hector connector' (J. Rolph's property)
 - The Triple Shot annual bicycle race
- Bear Mountain and Langford wanted to have more information about the legalities of trail building on private property (Bear Mountain is private property) – did some legal reviews

- **Action item:** get document from Daniel (Dale Gnd – who is no longer with Bear Mountain)
- Could have the property owners named on insurance
- Have been working with Saanich to find a way of offering a tax break for property owners who are willing to allow trails on their property
- Some people think that allowing trails will increase the number of undesirables, theft, but found that this is very rare
 - **Action Item:** Investigate crime data along the galloping goose/lochside trail before and after trail put in.
- Hector Connector:
 - The triple shot cycling club – fund youth bike training and coaching (road bikes with knobby tires) - do an annual 40 km circuit that goes through private property (up driveways, through barns, over porches)
 - The ‘hector connector’ began as part of the route for this 40 km circuit. The private property owner found that it was actually helpful to have the trail- that was cleared under some Hydro lines and through a large patch of blackberries. It actually was helpful because in the past the property owner had had a brush fire and the firefighters couldn’t get to the blaze and now he has a trail to an adjoining park
 - Don’t have a formal written agreement with J. to keep the trail, did have a document drafted up but didn’t end up using it.
- They built “electric avenue” through Ministry of Forest land. They build and maintain trail.

Future partnerships

- Did discuss the possibility of working with the Nature Trail Society to help develop trails in CS. Daniel suggested that we keep in touch.

Misc

- Open Street Maps – have old dirt roads
- Bike map.org collects close calls or collisions – may have some data
- Have had some discussions with unions about volunteers doing union work. They are talking with the union – the reality is that there is more work to do than could ever be done with union workers and volunteers
- **Action Item:** Reach out and connect to other groups that may share an interest in this idea: (Prairie Inn Running Club), Equestrian community, and talk with Lister, the fellow who has been organizing the 40 km circuit for Triple Shot – he has had many discussions with private property owners about trails.