

Councillor Istace Motion

RE: Economic Development Benefits of Multi-use sanctioning of Mt Richards

"THAT Council refer the matter of sport tourism to the Economic Development Committee and ask that they further investigate the proposal submitted by the Cowichan Trails Stewardship Society to develop Mount Richards for mixed-use outdoor recreation that encompasses cycling, and that the Committee make a recommendation to Council that considers the economic, social, and environmental impacts that cycling may pose to Mount Richards and other user groups."

Over the last 5 years I worked in destination marketing across BC in many small communities, photographing and writing stories on outdoor recreational attractions. This allowed me to become immersed in the economic effects that have benefitted countless communities across BC seeing firsthand the positive results of eco-tourism, notably cycling and multi-use trails system.

In the Cowichan Valley, we are now starting to see the benefits of North Cowichan's Parks and Trails master plan, local Chamber of Commerce and Tourism Cowichan from investing into local trails networks and marketing.

Additionally, the partnership of the Municipality of North Cowichan with the Cowichan Trail Stewardship Society (CTSS) has set the bar high with other Vancouver Island communities now emulating the success of this working relationship.

The economic spinoff has resulted in the local bike shops expanding, several new cycle coaching businesses startups, Cycling Canada National team training in North Cowichan as well as a handful of World Elite Cycling Athletes now calling the municipality home thanks to the benefits of having a well-managed parks and a premier trail system.

Stantec Consulting Report Following North Cowichan Public Engagement April 2016 – Parks and Trails Committee Presentation From Staff

Community Forest

Realizing the Potential of the Community Forest

At 25% of the municipality's land base, we are blessed with an amazing network of Community Forest. Established in 1946, the Community Forest has been managed under a multiple use management philosophy in accordance with the Forest Development Plan (2003). The Community Forest is managed to protect water quality and fish habitat, conserve soil productivity, grow trees for harvesting and facilitate outdoor recreation.

With the growth in outdoor recreation and nature-based tourism, there is an opportunity to achieve more in our Community Forest.

Going Forward

The Community Forest will continue to be managed to achieve multiple resource objectives including:

- Protecting water quality and quantity
- Protecting biological diversity
- Protecting sensitive ecosystems and habitats such as the Garry Oak Ecosystems
- Maintaining wildlife and fish habitat
- Sustainable forest harvesting
- Continuing First Nations traditional uses and protecting First Nation sacred sites and cultural resources
- Continuance of recreational and subsistence hunting



What will be different?

We will greatly emphasize the focus on developing an appealing network of outdoor recreation and nature-based tourism experiences with a focus on mountain biking, hiking and white water paddling. Through the application of leading integrated resource management practices, the Community Forest will enable our municipality to become central Vancouver Island's pre-eminent mountain biking, hiking and whitewater paddling destination. This added emphasis will:

- Diversify our economy and the economic benefits the Community Forest offers the region.
- Enhance quality of life for residents.
- Enhance the attractiveness of the North Cowichan Municipality to business investors and skilled labour.

Each of our community forests are unique and so too are the demands of residents and visitors who visit them. To appeal to as many different residents and visitors as possible, attention will be paid to ensuring each reserve offers a suite of unique visitor experiences that reflects and celebrates its ecological sensitivities, physical characteristics, history and First Nation's stories.

Experience the Amazing 6

- **Mount Tzouhalem's**—provide cross-country mountain-biking and hiking experiences for all abilities
- **Maple Mountain's**—provide more advanced all-mountain biking and hiking experiences
- **Stoney Hill**—provide inland and coastal hiking experiences for all abilities
- **Mount Richards**—provide cross-country mountain-biking and hiking experiences for all abilities
- **Mount Prevost**—provide more advanced downhill mountain biking and hiking experiences
- **Mount Sicker & Copper Canyon**—provide whitewater paddling experiences and mountain bike trail connections to Mount Prevost

Trail & Technical Feature Design

All trails in the Community Forest would be designed in accordance with International Mountain Bike Association standards.

All technical trail features will be designed in accordance with the Whistler Technical Trail Feature standards.



28

Prior to covid, **Ladysmith** released their **2018 Economic Development Strategy** report stating investment into the local forest via trail development is a key priority. The investments are estimated to generate \$650,000/yr in economic activity for the town.
(**page 20 of report)

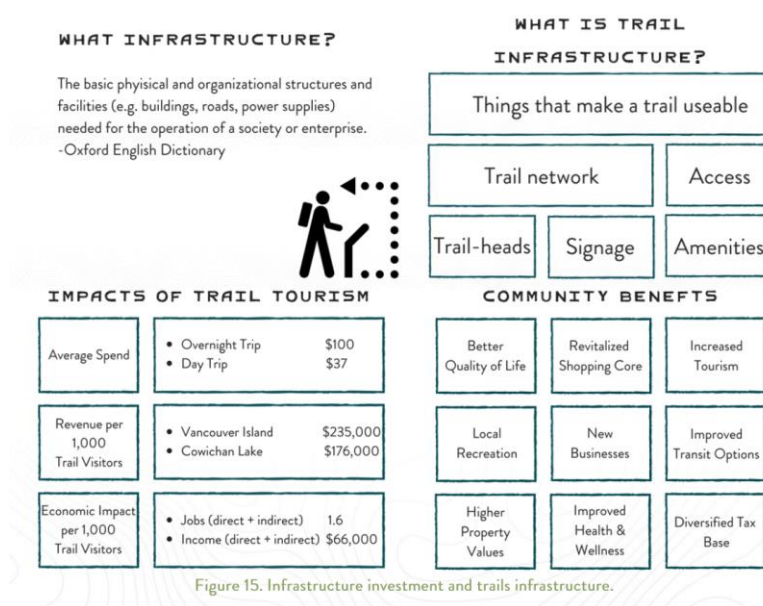
Mountain bike trail development

- Visitor spending impacts estimated relative to Squamish, which had a mountain biking economic impact study completed in 2014 showing nearly \$10 million in annual visitor spending.
- Ladysmith impacts are estimated at 1/15th the level of Squamish after 3-5 years of growth, or about \$650,000 per year.
- Per trail impacts are assumed to be only one-third as high in Ladysmith given Squamish's proximity to other biking destinations like North Vancouver and Whistler and its more established tourism infrastructure like accommodations and gear shops.

Lake Cowichan recently completed a \$100,000 study with Tourism Vancouver Island and Community Futures Cowichan on the future of Eco-tourism in the region.

The study states *“The Cowichan Lake Region Tourism Action Plan is a regional collaboration of western Cowichan communities to seize the economic opportunity from the increasing demand for tourism experiences in the Region.”*

This 2018 study through research data stated that in the **Vancouver Island that region, for every 1000 trail visitors there is an economic affect of \$235,000 for the community while creating 1.6 jobs with an income of \$66,000 (indirect & direct)** (*page 39 of study)



In North Cowichan, the CTSS has successfully lobbied the **BC Bike Race** to host Day one of the 2018 event locally and a return in 2019. Now in 2023 the BCBR event has announced its return to North Cowichan for not one, but three days seeing up to 650 participants return to experience the Cowichan Valley competing on Mt Tzouhalem and Maple Mountain.

Based on the BC Bike summary from a 2014 study, the event organizer spent \$152,000 on race day operational expenditures in **Cumberland**. The report also stated that visitor expenditures were \$40,000 in the community.

Table 3.1 Economic Impact Results

	Total Province	Vancouver	Cumberland	Campbell River	Powell River	Sechelt	Squamish	Whistler	Rest of Province*
Initial Expenditure	\$1,547,905	\$865,393	\$103,456	\$79,197	\$77,235	\$80,119	\$222,598	\$119,906	\$0
GDP	\$1,892,725	\$862,625	\$48,352	\$39,159	\$38,533	\$38,779	\$49,166	\$37,141	\$778,969
Wages & Salaries	\$1,364,732	\$738,145	\$33,667	\$27,266	\$26,873	\$27,017	\$36,979	\$28,012	\$446,772
Jobs	20.2	6.6	0.9	0.8	0.7	0.8	1.2	0.7	8.5
Total Taxes	\$719,337	\$335,682	\$19,784	\$16,514	\$16,317	\$16,368	\$24,761	\$20,575	\$269,337
Federal	\$358,872	\$169,870	\$9,581	\$7,940	\$7,842	\$7,864	\$11,348	\$9,125	\$135,302
Provincial	\$262,509	\$123,634	\$6,977	\$5,884	\$5,821	\$5,833	\$9,177	\$7,851	\$97,332
Municipal	\$97,956	\$42,178	\$3,225	\$2,690	\$2,653	\$2,672	\$4,236	\$3,598	\$36,703
Industry Output	\$3,390,114	\$1,413,397	\$152,059	\$117,055	\$114,422	\$117,422	\$255,190	\$138,687	\$1,081,881

*note that the rest of province column refers to spillover effects of economic activity taking place within the province of BC but outside of the host community. As such the economic impact may actually be higher than indicated in some of the communities listed, for example if the Whistler spillover expenditures took place in Vancouver, it would not be reflected in the Vancouver column.

New for 2023, the Belgian Waffle Ride based out of California has announced its very first Canadian race ever. This International cross country gravel cycling race will be held in North Cowichan with an expected 1000 participants travelling to the region. Initial speculation on the event is it will set the record for largest gravel cycling event held in BC.

At the **2018 UBCM (Union of BC Municipalities)** there was a presentation by IMBA (International MTB Assoc) where they showed that trail development is the lowest cost investment by a municipality for high returns for eco-tourism. When you compare arena sports at \$496/user or field sports at \$99/user to trail users at an average of \$0.89/ per user the net benefit vs capital outlay is massive.

The results: Total Costs per user over 5 years:

Facility	\$ per user (max cap.)	\$ per user (typ cap.)	\$ per individual (est) the 'Jimmy' factor
Arena-based sports (curling/hockey/figure skating/speed skating)	\$149 - 210	\$496 - 701	\$13,333 - 80,000
Swimming Pool	\$20	\$109	\$2,750
Baseball	\$29	\$82	\$4,383
Field Sports (soccer, football, rugby)	\$18 - 36	\$99-163	\$4,875 - 6,042
Tennis Court (incl. pickleball)	\$9.30	\$74	\$3,750
Gymnasium (basketball, fitness classes)	\$1.74	\$28	\$875
Trail Activities (24km) (hiking, running, mountain biking)	\$0.30 - 0.97	\$0.89 - \$7.28	\$150 - \$733
Disc Golf	\$1.09	\$8.68	\$60



To summarize I share all of this to highlight the potential to change at how we look at the sanctioned use of Mt Richards with regards to the economic benefit to Crofton and North Cowichan as a whole. Crofton can be seen as the hub to a remarkable outdoor experience from cycling and hiking, to kayaking and equestrian plus so much more.

With the economic uncertainty of Paper Excellence as a prime employer to the town, exploring new economic development opportunities would be a task well suited for North Cowichan's new Economic Development committee. This work also aligns with North Cowichan Council's strategic priorities with regards to supporting local organizations as well as promoting sport tourism as an economic driver.

North Cowichan will be looking to sanction the Mt. Richards area next years and the 2017 Parks & Trails Master Plan excluded mountain biking from this area. I am looking for councils support to further explore the position paper from the CTSS delegation advocating to amend the plan to include mountain biking. This position comes from a social, ecological and economic perspective.