

SUNSHINE COAST REGIONAL DISTRICT
TRAIL NETWORK TASK FORCE
GAMBIER ISLAND SOUTH WEST PENINSULA

August 13, 2017

FIELD NOTES FROM THE TRAIL NETWORK TASK FORCE GAMBIER ISLAND SOUTH WEST PENINSULA "WALK AND TALK" HELD ON THE SOUTH WEST PENINSULA OF GAMBIER ISLAND, B.C.

PRESENT:	Members	Boris Gorgitza Carol Barlow Emily Pickett Kevin Grodesky Natasha Tousaw Todd Gordon
ALSO PRESENT:	Parks Planning Coordinator (Facilitator) Acting GM, Planning & Community Development Planning Technician Note Taker Members of the Public	Sam Adams Karen Preston Sven Koberwitz Diane Corbett approx. 20-25 per site

START TIME 10:30 a.m.

BACKGROUND

The "Walk and Talk" was an opportunity for the Trail Network Task Force to meet with neighbors and residents to discuss and evaluate proposed public trail locations on the Gambier Island southwest peninsula and design strategies related to privacy, safety and environmental protection.

Invitations were sent by mail to property owners on the South West Peninsula to join the Trails Network Task Force for a "Walk and Talk"; Gambier residents were invited to attend through an advertisement in the local newspaper.

The event was facilitated by the Parks Planning Coordinator and supported by other staff and Task Force members. Comment was invited from those in attendance regarding each proposed trail site.

"WALK AND TALK"

Site 1: Gambier Island Community Centre

A trail begins on Andy's Road uphill from the Community Centre. If connected to West Bay Road, it could enable people from the west side of the southwest peninsula to cut travel time to the

Community Centre approximately in half. It could also serve to guide people out to further trails. The right of way is 66 feet; a trail could go to one side to accommodate sight lines or wellheads.

The Parks Planning Coordinator introduced himself and provided background regarding trails on Gambier as noted in reports, public consultations and the Gambier Island Official Community Plan. The importance of privacy, water and the environment were acknowledged in public consultations and in the OCP. The purpose of this field trip is to see the various sites on the ground and to receive community input.

Attendees were invited to introduce themselves and indicate what they hoped to get out of the site visit. There was a roundtable of introductions.

Comments mentioned included:

- Concerned about conservation; checking out what this is about.
- (Resident of Austin Trails) Concern that the trail would impact privacy.
- Confused about safety, security, privacy and logic of some of the trails.
- Have had stranger wandering on property; would like to understand changes in the map.
- Think that people adjacent to a proposed trail should have an absolute vote on whether it should proceed.
- Shocked about what is proposed. This has caused division.
- Don't see recommendations in minutes identifying trails. How did the Task Force determine them?
 - Staff advised they were drawn from previous consultations.
- Complaint: short notice to adjacent neighbours regarding the Walk and Talk.
- Owner of property at end of Andy's Road had been impacted by people walking on the property. Need signage saying "no water".
- If we say "no" (to trails), will it be accepted?
- (Owner of property on Austin Trails) Trails proposed are self-serving. Want to find out who is proposing this. Need to distinguish full-time or part-time/cottagers. Are opening doors to the barn. Have issues regarding the two surveys and their results and process.
- Support trails.
- Against any trails environmentally. Concerned about opening the door. Do not have them in residential.
- There are very few trails. There is a lack of signage saying "private property", "no water". Trails are wonderful to enjoy. We should be able to use these accesses to nature.
- Concern that a small group of people opposed to trails is coming up against the values of the Gambier Island Official Community Plan (OCP). It would irreversibly change how Gambier will develop in the future.
- Favour trails. Signage being taken down has always been a problem.
- Person has no vehicle; walks and bikes. Thought trails would be wonderful.
- Put trails "up there", out of everybody's way.
- Concern: policing of motorized vehicles on trails.
- On this trail, it would be easy for motorized vehicles to access. This would impact adjacent residents.

- There are lots of “private” and “no trespassing” signs. People see signs and think it is a trail. Don’t want to put up more signs.

Site 2: Austin Trails

There is a right of way from West Bay dock to this location. This is the Austin Trails community. The right of way spreads into the Crown Land behind the community. Staff asked, if it were recommended that a way is needed to direct people to the back country, how would you move people through your community if you had a choice?

Comments from discussion:

- (Owner of two properties adjacent to site) We have not touched or disturbed the land unless necessary. It is an owl rookery here. Nearby are salamanders that make their way up from Cotton Bay. Owner is sensitive to ecological things happening here, and had not even fenced the sensitive area. Thinks that as soon as you allow human access to an area, it degrades. This is not just about privacy; owner wants to preserve the green space. There are existing trails. Gambier has no fire suppression, no search and rescue service. You have to be fit and know what you are doing. A resounding “no” – it is about ecology and respecting the island. Focus on the Crown land. Opposed to cutting through peoples’ back yard.
- Bought up here because it was quiet. It is a dead end road. Concern about motorized vehicles.
- I want to be able to walk to West Bay easily. Want an accessible way that isn’t driving. Austin Trails is not speaking as one voice. A useable walking trail would be of benefit to me.
- When I bought I was told the right of way was proposed road. A change of use requires a different process. This goes off the margins of what was intended originally.
 - Staff had not heard that and will look into this.
- Some lots at Austin Trails are owned by the Province and could be developed in the future.
- A lot of people against (a trail) are those who would be affected by it.
- Owner of property near Cotton Bay sees foot traffic, and was not against the concept of trails as they give access to the beauty of the islands. The benefit of experience and history was shaping this person’s concerns; the owner advocated the need to think of these trails as different from trails on the Sunshine Coast. There is a different demographic that comes to Gambier to use the trails; these people won’t read signs, or pick up garbage. These trails won’t work, based on the owner’s experience of living in this place. It is different here. There are people shooting, target practicing, near owner’s house.
- Please take care of trails we already have. Get good signage.
- People directly affected have objections. People slightly removed think “why care?”
- If people have built incorrectly on road allowance, would they have to knock down their place?
- A number of the roads and trails are not on road allowance so the historical argument becomes invalidated. What they did years ago doesn’t matter anymore.

Staff summarized that this spot is a unique spot. It needs a particular look at owls and wetlands. It is a cul-de-sac. People who live here feel they need to get into this country as well.

Site 3: West Bay Road by the Sawmill

Adjacent owner showed staff where the right of way is located, and reported that the hill collects water that feeds the wetlands. Islands Trust asked him to get a covenant to protect the wetlands.

This location is on the “other side” of the trail near the Community Centre; the idea would be to connect the Community Centre to here. The sawmill is beside the 66-foot right of way. This spot is at the top of the Grenman Creek watershed. The location is 200 metres from where the group stopped at the first location, which was slightly beyond the big maple.

In response to an inquiry, staff indicated he would look into covenants through this area.

Staff explained that the Task Force would make recommendations on trails. The Board would make the decision. The Board considers concerns sent in. No decision has been made on trails. Staff will write a draft idea in a report to the Planning and Community Development Committee. There is also an opportunity for further public input, to forward to the Planning and Community Development Committee and Board.

Comments from discussion included:

- Is it the intent of the Task Force to make recommendations on what trails?
 - Staff explained there would be a process: the included community input, Task Force recommendations and staff recommendations the SCRD standing committee.
- The trail would come down from the connector along an owner’s boundary. His well is very close to the boundary. An Islands Trust representative had suggested a fence the whole length of the boundary (if there were a trail). It would need to be maintained, and would be costly.
- Discussion of road maintenance
- Are there ways of putting trails through sensitive environments?
- The moment you start changing the configuration of the trees, there is a downward spiral.
 - Staff responded that a Qualified Environmental Professional (QEP) would look at potential spots that would be surveyed. There would be the application of a detailed environmental checklist.
- I hope you are open to hearing “no thank you” and moving on.
 - Staff indicated to the affirmative and explained a process was being worked through. This is an opportunity to look at different spots and understand the neighbours and their concerns.
- Encourage the Task Force to make formal recommendations in the minutes.

During the break, staff looked at the 33-foot right of way behind Lions Estates with some members of the public. Comments of attendees included: it is wet; there has never been any interest in this. Staff noted Dulcie was suggested in a 2007 SCRD Trail Network Plan.

Site 4: Dulcie Road Central

This is the same right of way that runs along Lion Estates. There is a wet area at the edge of Lions Estates property. Five hundred metres from this point southward would be near Anuvets Park). To the north, a large bluff occupies part of the right of way; a trail would need steps installed.

Comments from discussion included:

- Regarding the Task Force Terms of Reference: is it not the decision of the Task Force to determine if things are worthy? Was shocked to see staff as Chair. How empowered is the Task Force? Wonder if they understand their role. How do members introduce topics? That is a big concern for me. Staff has pre-conceived notions about what has merit. It is important for staff to take a step back. Process is important. There should have been a resolution from the Task Force on trails to look at. The Task Force has not adopted the matrix yet.
 - Task Force member mentioned having some of those concerns, and remarked that the group was given those trails, presented them. Another Task Force member noted the trails came from the questionnaire. Staff noted every trail was part of another process as well.
- Adjacent owner remarked that they bought the property knowing of the road allowance. Process is important. Without proper process the community gets divided. Concerned with the divide observed among neighbours. Do not see everyone supporting this process, where everyone has a chance to speak. Staff should not be leading; the Task Force should make its own decisions, and agree what properties to look at, with weighted criteria (how to include or not include), and adoption of the matrix.
 - A Task Force member reported the group explicitly supported the five trails from GICA, although it was not explicitly stated.
- What is the purpose of this connector? What are we trying to connect?
 - A Task Force member noted it could be a Gambier Harbour/ West Bay connection. Another member noted the lower end goes over a bluff and was probably impassable.
- Is there consensus on the Task Force on if it would be passable?
 - A Task Force member replied there was not yet consensus; the original trail committee (GICA) said it was impassable. No one had checked. A logger reported it is steep (over 100 foot bluff); roads would not happen.
- The trail now runs into a road and would be parallel to the road. What is the purpose?
- If a trail isn't going to happen, do we (Task Force) say it is out of here?
- Will the Parks Master Plan be updated?
 - It is updated as necessary. There is a new Parks Master Plan online.
 - SCRDC is in the process of adopting standards; there are five levels of trails. SCRDC has been using a forestry model from the 2007 Parks Master Plan.
- A Task Force member thought the Task Force had rushed through this process, and recommended taking a longer time.

Signage advocating “No trails in SW Gambier” was observed at various locations en route and was carried by at least one participant in the walk.

Closing Circle / Conclusion

Those in attendance gave closing remarks that included:

- Thanks to staff and everyone for coming today.
- Will send correspondence to SCRCD regarding the Task Force process.
- Glad we have done today. Have to tighten the process, get this right now and for the future. The Task Force will have to have more meetings. Have been concerned on how this has divided the community. Grateful for input regarding process.
- Productive and eventful day.
- Felt rushed. Useful and informative to go to sites.
- Agree, rushed. Need to extend/ prolong it. It is important to figure how to do it properly. Issue: divisiveness, people hating each other. You can't ignore feelings of people. We should not rush this; do it properly.
- Had a feeling these trails were going through. This has brought clarity to this process. You have clarified this isn't happening. People didn't know, and felt things were happening behind their back. Am not against trails. There are places for them.
- Have listened to trail discussion for years. It often went nowhere. It has always been a desire to have young kids running around, exploring, etc. (like we used to do as kids). This has been an interesting experience. A lot of passion has been expressed – most people want to preserve, protect and enjoy. Got to see a lot of the island. Take your time. I was an observer today. Task Force: good for you. Thank you.
- Little connector trails bring too much discord. Focus on the lakes. Paths should be well maintained. I bought in Austin Trails seventeen years ago. This is the first year here full-time. We have been so welcomed. We wander through peoples' property with permission. We are trying to leave a light footprint. There are lots of ways to experience this land, rather than hacking. Focus on actual destinations. We have big things coming down the road. Would like to see this be done and over with.
- There is a lot of animosity. It exists. Think a lot of this trail stuff is a done deal. Somewhere down the road there'll be a compromise. Think the process has gone too far... I am sceptical.
- I am thankful for neighbours who allow me to walk on their property for a walk. Don't envy the Task Force having to balance the needs.
- Thanks to everybody involved today. Have learned a lot. Helpful.
- Gambier needs signage to help people get around.
- This trail (Dulcie Central) is not likely to be developed. We knew it was steep, not likely a viable trail.
- Agree.
- It was a good exercise today. A lot of things about process and information have been clarified.

ADJOURNMENT 3:30 p.m.