



Shared Strategy for Trails in Nova Scotia

*Advancing Pathways to Discovery,
Wellness and Community Connections*



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Contents

Executive Summary	1
Introduction	8
Why a System of High-Quality and Sustainable Trails Is Important	8
The Need for a Shared Strategy for Trails in Nova Scotia	9
Purpose of the Strategy	10
How the Strategy was Developed	11
Trails Strategy Alignment with Other Important Initiatives	12
What Do We Mean by “Trail”	14
A Vision for Trails in Nova Scotia	15
Guiding Principles	16
Strategic Goals and Actions	17
Goal 1:	17
Goal 2:	21
Goal 3:	23
Goal 4:	25
Moving Forward: A Plan of Action	27
Conclusion: A Call to Action	30
Appendix I: Glossary of Terms	31
Appendix II: Key Factors that Informed the Development of the Strategy	33
Appendix III: List of Consultations and Documents Used in Development of Strategy	35
Appendix IV: How the Trails Strategy Fits with Other Important Initiatives	37



Executive Summary

Nova Scotia's rich and varied landscape is crisscrossed by thousands of kilometres of trails just waiting to be explored. The trails come in many forms including: neighbourhood footpaths, multi-use rail trails, canoe routes, off-highway vehicles routes, long-distance hiking opportunities or any number of other forms of travelways.

Nova Scotians have long recognized the importance of trails. They provide opportunities for everyone to engage in an active outdoor lifestyle that contributes to our physical and spiritual well-being. Trails enable families, friends and neighbours to be active together and connect with one another, enriching the vibrancy and attractiveness of communities. Trails are our portal into, and means to make a stronger connection with the natural world. Trails provide access to special places, cultural landmarks and unique recreation experiences. They provide the infrastructure for greener and healthier transportation alternatives. Trails support many economic activities and tourism opportunities resulting in jobs and helping to support our vibrant communities year-round.

Nova Scotia has a strong foundation on which to build. We have individuals and groups with substantial knowledge and capacity for trail development. Our trails community is engaged and passionate. Our trails system is substantial, diverse and deeply rooted in communities. Trails are a vital element of many important strategies. While there is much to be proud of, there is a strong belief that more can be done.

The Shared Strategy for Trails in Nova Scotia reflects a shared vision and commitment to action, by community groups, provincial trail user/management organizations, Mi'kmaq communities, businesses, landowners and the various levels of government. It focuses action on the main issues and concerns that the trails community as a whole agrees need to be addressed. It provides the framework, principles, priorities and guidance necessary for the trails community to develop and maintain a quality system of trails that contributes in a meaningful way to the quality of life of all Nova Scotians.

A Vision for Trails in Nova Scotia

Nova Scotians and visitors have access to a variety of high quality, safe and appealing trail opportunities and are using them regularly. As a result, we enjoy many health, social, cultural, environmental and economic benefits.



The achievement of this vision will mean:

1. quality trail experiences are enhancing the well-being of all Nova Scotians,
2. the system of trails is varied, valued and sustainable over the long term,
3. trails are contributing to the vibrancy, prosperity and connectivity of communities,
4. trails are advancing knowledge, appreciation and caring of the natural world and our cultural heritage, and
5. the agencies, organizations and communities that make up the trails community are more aligned in their visions, sharing knowledge and resources and working collaboratively.

Guiding Principles

The Shared Strategy for Trails in Nova Scotia reflects seven integrated principles:

- a) **Maximize use** – creating a broad spectrum of high quality and safe trail opportunities relevant to the needs of users and communities,
- b) **Quality** – trails are developed and managed to appropriate and consistent standards,
- c) **Sustainability** – developing and managing trails so they are sustainable for the long term,
- d) **Accessibility** – all Nova Scotians are able to participate in trail experiences,
- e) **Partnership** – working collaboratively to find and realize a shared vision that reflects the aspirations and the broader potential for trails in the province,
- f) **Community development** – communities and groups are empowered and enabled to set direction and take the action needed to be successful in their trail work, and
- g) **Benefits oriented** – optimizing the benefits for individuals, communities and the province.

Strategic Goals and Priority Actions

The Strategy is made up of four goals with clear priorities for action. One of the first actions will be the creation of a Trails Strategy Coordinating Group (TSCG) to support and coordinate the implementation of the strategy. The goals are:

GOAL #1

Strengthen Alignment, Leadership and Collaboration of Trail Development

To achieve the desired variety, quality and connectivity of trails across the province will require key organizations in the trails community to adopt new approaches and ways of working together. Five actions will help to support this development.

GOAL #2

Expand Supports for Trail Development and Management

Engaged, knowledgeable and supported trail developers, managers and groups are essential to an effective trails movement. Three actions will expand and strengthen the most critical supports needed.

GOAL #3

Improve the Planning of Trails

Trails and community groups have indicated they need assistance with local trail planning and gaining access to lands and waterways. In addition, the vision we've set for ourselves in this plan will require new approaches and processes to create regional and provincial plans and priorities. Three priority actions will help to improve the planning and sustainability of trails.

GOAL #4

Increase Trail Use

Our goal is for all Nova Scotians to use and value our trails. Four priority actions will improve trail experiences and use.

Recommended Roles & Responsibilities

The trails community in Nova Scotia is made up of many different agencies, organizations and groups. Each is able to contribute something unique and valuable. The success of the trails movement is, in large measure, the result of each player doing what they do best. The most urgent priority for government, the Nova Scotia Trails Federation and a new Trails Strategy Coordinating Group is to align efforts and enhance supports for community groups.

Moving Forward: A Plan of Action

The Shared Strategy for Trails in Nova Scotia is designed as a 'roadmap' that establishes direction and desired outcomes. It provides the flexibility for community groups, provincial organizations, Mi'kmaw communities, businesses, landowners and the various levels of government to contribute to goals consistent with their core mandates and jurisdictions. The Strategy will be implemented as complementary action plans are developed by these organizations, individually and collectively.





Overview of the Shared Strategy for Trails

Vision

All Nova Scotians and visitors have access to a broad spectrum of high quality, safe and appealing trail opportunities and are using them regularly. As a result, we enjoy many health, social, cultural, environmental and economic benefits.

Strategic Goals & Actions

1 Strengthen Alignment, Leadership and Collaboration of Trail Organizations	2 Expand Supports for Trail Development and Management	3 Improve the Planning of Trails	4 Increase Trail Use
1.1 establish a Trails Strategy Coordinating Group to support and coordinate the implementation of the strategy 1.2 ensure provincial government contributions to trails are efficient and effective 1.3 expand municipal government engagement in trails 1.4 review the strategic positioning of the Nova Scotia Trails Federation 1.5 clarify the roles, relationships, approaches and processes of the various organizations that make up the trails community	2.1 collect, develop and share resources regarding effective trail development and management 2.2 increase the number and capabilities of trail developers and managers in the regions 2.3 diversify, enlarge and stabilize the financial base for trails	3.1 identify, promote and support adoption of the most effective model(s) for trail planning 3.2 collect, develop and share resources that support trail planning 3.3 secure access to lands and waterways for trails	4.1 promote our trails 4.2 provide information/resources that support increased trail use 4.3 engage youth in trails 4.4 promote safe and responsible trail use and strengthen enforcement

Long-Term Outcomes

1. quality trail experiences are enhancing the well-being of all Nova Scotians,
2. the system of trails is varied, valued and sustainable over the long term,
3. trails are contributing to the vibrancy, prosperity and connectivity of communities,
4. trails are advancing knowledge, appreciation and caring of the natural world and our cultural heritage, and
5. the agencies, organizations and communities that make up the trails community are more aligned in their visions, sharing knowledge and resources and working collaboratively.

Introduction

Why a System of High-Quality and Sustainable Trails Is Important

Since the first water and land routes were established by the Mi'kmaq, trails have played a vital role in the well-being of people, communities, the environment and the economy of Nova Scotia.

Individual Well-being

Trails provide one of the most accessible forms of recreation. They make it easy for people of all ages, backgrounds and abilities to incorporate physical activity into their lives, contributing to their physical, mental and spiritual well-being, potentially saving millions in health care spending.

Strong Communities

Trails strengthen community fabric – enriching the vibrancy, appeal and connectedness of communities. They enable families, friends and neighbours to be active while spending time together in beautiful outdoor settings. They provide opportunities for meaningful volunteer experiences – a collaborative activity that creates vital and lasting relationships. Trails provide greener, healthier and more enjoyable transportation alternatives.

Appreciating and Protecting the Environment

Trails provide meaningful and satisfying outdoor experiences for many users. They enable users to experience a rich diversity of landscapes and activities and help to direct users away from more sensitive features. These experiences foster a better understanding, appreciation and caring for Nova Scotia's natural and cultural heritage.

A Stronger Economy

There are real economic benefits from having a system of well-managed trails. Trail building and maintenance support local economies through the hiring of contractors and purchase of materials. Trail users, whether residents or visitors to our province, buy goods, services, food and accommodations. Tourism Nova Scotia's 2015 Visitor Exit Survey showed pleasure visitors are more likely than other visitors to take part in outdoor activities such as hiking or cycling. While outdoor activities might not be someone's primary reason for coming to Nova Scotia, the availability of quality, accessible product is important for our higher spending pleasure visitors.

Trails-based tourism creates jobs and puts money into local economies year-round. This is particularly important in rural communities. The off-highway vehicle (OHV) community's, *Report on Direct Spending in Nova Scotia* provides additional support of the economic importance of trails.

The Need for a Shared Strategy for Trails in Nova Scotia

In 2010, the Nova Scotia Trails Federation and the Government of Nova Scotia jointly organized the *Trails for Tomorrow Today Conference* and *Government Summit on Trails* to take stock of the tremendous progress made on developing a wide variety of high quality, safe and appealing trail opportunities over the last 40 years and envision what was needed for the future.

Delegates at both events, as well as at many other gatherings that have taken place over the last decade, concluded that while there was much to celebrate, that more could and should be done to enable all Nova Scotians and visitors to enjoy, value and benefit from our trails. The following were seen as the most important areas for focus on over the next 10 years:

- a) improve supports for trail developers and managers,
- b) create and distribute resources to support the planning, development and management of trails that maximize accessibility, use and benefits and reduce the potential for any harms,
- c) develop trails to foster a better understanding, appreciation and caring for Nova Scotia's natural and cultural heritage,

- d) strengthen the sustainability of trails and community volunteers,
- e) make government processes less complicated and reduce bureaucracy,
- f) establish the means to plan and support trail development at the regional and provincial levels,
- g) expand the information, resources, support services and amenities available for trail users – making trails easier to find, use and enjoy,
- h) improve the safety and security for trail users and land owners,
- i) secure access to lands and waterways critical to the trail system, and
- j) strengthen collaboration within the trails community.

There was widespread agreement that making progress on these issues would require the entire trails community coming together to develop a provincial strategy that would be shared and implemented collaboratively. In response, the Nova Scotia Trails Federation and the Government of Nova Scotia formed the Trails Strategy Working Group (TSWG) to lead a process that brings together all those interested in trails to develop a strategy for the advancement of trails in the province.

Purpose of the Strategy

The Strategy for Trails in Nova Scotia provides the framework, principles, priorities and guidance necessary for the trails community to develop and maintain a quality system of trails that contributes in a meaningful way to the quality of life of all Nova Scotians. The strategy ensures that the quality and sustainability of existing trails are protected, that investments in expanding the trails network are made strategically and that the organizations that make up the trails movement are effectively supported.

The strategy is intended to:

- define a shared vision for trails – one that calls the trails community to action in a coordinated way,
- establish strategic directions and focused priorities that support the trails community and the development of an integrated system of trails in the province, and
- help the different groups within the trails community connect and work together even more.

Municipalities and trail organizations representing provincial user groups, regional and local interests will continue to identify and act on those issues of particular importance to their communities and memberships. **The Shared Strategy for Trails in Nova Scotia focuses on the issues and opportunities that have the broad agreement of the trails community and identifies areas where we can work collectively.** It is meant to be supportive of all the great work done by the many members of the trails community. Through a shared commitment and aligned actions, progress on our collective challenges will come more quickly.

How the Strategy was Developed

While the Trails Strategy Working Group initiated and guided the process, the strategy is the result of a truly collaborative effort by the entire trails community.

Note: *the trails community is made up of trail builder and user groups, provincial agencies, recreation organizations, municipal and provincial governments, not-for-profit organizations, landowners, the Mi'kmaq, and hundreds of stakeholders from across the province.*

The strategy was developed by and for the trails community, over the course of four phases.

Phase I involved a review of successful trails strategies in other jurisdictions, interviews with strategy planners as well as extensive consultations with the trails community across the province. A list of the documents reviewed are provided in Appendix III.

Phase II involved a series of face-to-face conversations with members of the trails community to begin to outline the vision, goals and priorities that would advance the trails movement and help address the key issues. Eighty individuals with considerable expertise, governance, policy and planning, and leadership of trails organizations were invited to review, refine and add to the ideas. This resulted in an initial framework for the strategy.

Phase III involved consultation (via an online survey) with individuals and provincial stakeholder groups, the Mi'kmaq, municipal leaders, and provincial government departments, providing every member of the trails community with an opportunity to review and suggest improvements to the draft strategy. As a result, *The Trails Movement in Nova Scotia: Past and Present* was prepared. It profiled the history, current state, and most importantly, the core elements needed in a provincial trails strategy.

Phase IV involved engagement of municipal governments, the Mi' kmaq and provincial user organizations, and acquiring formal endorsement of the Shared Strategy for Trails by the Nova Scotia Trails Federation Board and provincial government.

The Strategy was developed to capitalize on the considerable strengths of the current trail system and trails community, respond to the most pressing needs and opportunities and address the most significant challenges and issues. It takes advantage of and contributes to other important and related initiatives. The key factors that informed the development of the Strategy are outlined in Appendix II.

The Shared Strategy for Trails in Nova Scotia is the result of unprecedented collaboration and a consensus of the trails community in Nova Scotia on the best way forward.

Trails Strategy Alignment with Other Important Initiatives

This strategy is intimately aligned with a number of strategic initiatives across multiple sectors. Some of these initiatives contain similar goals and will contribute to the success of this strategy. Others will benefit from ensuring we have a healthy and sustainable trails system and community in the province, in particular Nova Scotia's Culture Action Plan: Creativity and Community (2017), SHIFT: Nova Scotia's Action Plan for an Aging Population (2017), Parks for All: An Action Plan for Canada's Park Community (2017), Let's Get Moving, A Common Vision for Increasing Physical Activity and Reducing Sedentary Living (2018), the Shared Strategy for Advancing Recreation in Nova Scotia (2015), Choose How You Move: Sustainable Transportation Strategy (2013), the Tourism Strategy for Nova Scotia (2013), the Parks and Protected Areas Plan (2013) and the Blue Route provincial bicycling network.

The Culture Action Plan's fifth theme, Excellence in Cultural Stewardship, names and supports the trails strategy as a means to improve our social and individual lives, shaping community identity, building pride of place, connecting us to our natural surroundings, and bringing together people from different backgrounds.

Trails also advance SHIFT's goal to promote healthy, active living which commits to developing a provincial approach to encouraging physical activity at all ages, including diverse middle-age aged and older adults with a strong emphasis on walking.

Trails that support destination-oriented travel are essential to achieving the vision and goals of Let's Get Moving, A Common Vision for Increasing Physical Activity and Reducing Sedentary Living Framework. They provide key connections and routes for active transportation networks in Nova Scotia communities making our communities and the province safer and more appealing to pedestrians and cyclists.

Trails support the provincial and national recreation goals outlined in The Shared Strategy for Advancing Recreation in Nova Scotia by providing venues for active living, active transportation, connecting people with nature and strengthening the capacity of communities.

The Parks and Protected Areas Plan (2013) supports the establishment of long distance hiking trails in Nova Scotia and the establishing a provincial waterways program for recreation and conservation purposes.

The trails strategy also connects with local and non-profit sector strategic initiatives. For example, it aligns with key provincial recreation organization documents, such as the Nova Scotia Trails Federation's Strategic Framework, the SANS' Strategic Plan, the Hike Nova Scotia Strategic Plan 2017 and the ATVANS' Multi-year Strategic Plan. In addition to this, many municipal planning strategies, as well as physical activity, open space and active transportation plans, have trails as a key consideration in their vision and goals.

Appendix IV further outlines many of the key initiatives supported by this strategy



What Do We Mean by “Trail”

Trails come in many different forms and can provide equally diverse experiences. Trail can refer to a simple neighbourhood footpath, multi-use rail trail, canoe route, winding OHV track to a favourite hunting or fishing spot, a challenging long distance hiking opportunity or any number of other forms of travelways. Water trails illustrate how our definition of what is a trail evolves and changes with time. The way trails are valued also shapes how they are defined. Trails are primarily used for recreational purposes, however they are also increasingly valued for their role in the promotion of health and wellness, active transportation, environmental and cultural education, economic development, and strengthening community. For the purpose of the strategy, trails can include all of the above but the focus is on managed trails available for public use.



A Vision for Trails in Nova Scotia

The trails community is united in its commitment to achieving the following long-term outcomes:

1. quality trail experiences are enhancing the well-being of all Nova Scotians,
2. the system of trails is varied, valued and sustainable over the long term,
3. trails are contributing to the vibrancy, prosperity and connectivity of communities,
4. trails are advancing knowledge, appreciation and caring of the natural world and our cultural heritage, and
5. the agencies, organizations and communities that make up the trails community are more aligned in their visions, sharing knowledge and resources and working collaboratively.

To achieve these outcomes, the following vision has been adopted for the next 10 years:

All Nova Scotians and visitors have access to a variety of high-quality, safe and appealing trail opportunities and are using them regularly. As a result, we enjoy many health, social, cultural, environmental and economic benefits.



Guiding Principles

Throughout the process of developing the Shared Strategy, the trails community identified a number of core principles that would inform the development of the strategy and to guide all the actions taken to implement it. They are:

- a) **Maximize use** – creating a broad spectrum of high-quality and safe trail opportunities relevant to the needs of users and communities,
- b) **Quality** – trails are developed and managed to appropriate and consistent standards,
- c) **Sustainability** – managing and developing trails to be sustainable for the long term – therefore, the primary focus will be on maintaining the quality of trails currently in use while any new trail projects must be both strategically important and feasible to maintain,
- d) **Accessibility** – all Nova Scotians are able to participate in trail experiences,
- e) **Partnership** – working collaboratively to identify and achieve a shared vision that reflects the aspirations and the broader potential for trails in the province,
- f) **Community development** – communities and groups are empowered and enabled to set direction and take the action needed to be successful in their trail work, and
- g) **Benefits oriented** – optimizing the benefits for individuals, communities and the province.



Strategic Goals and Actions

The vision will be achieved by working on four broad goals, each made up of a number of actions and steps. These have been developed to be complementary to one another and therefore will be pursued in a coordinated way. These goals and actions represent a starting point and will be adapted as circumstances change.

GOAL #1

Strengthen Alignment, Leadership and Collaboration of Trail Organizations

To achieve the desired variety, quality and connectivity of trails across the province will require key organizations in the trails community to adopt new approaches to visioning, aligning, working together, sharing knowledge, resources and best practices, leading and coordinating efforts. The following five actions will help to support this development.

Actions:

1.1 Establish a Trails Strategy Coordinating Group (TSCG) to support and coordinate the implementation of the strategy, including:

- communicating and encouraging alignment of the trails community with the Strategy
- providing a way for trails stakeholders to plan and coordinate trails at the provincial and regional levels
- assisting with establishing strategic priorities based on greatest needs and benefits
- providing opportunities for trails stakeholder groups to connect; align visions, plans and activities; and share knowledge, resources and best practices
- forming and supporting working groups to take responsibility for aspects of implementing the Strategy
- systematically monitoring, measuring and reporting on progress implementing the Strategy

Specific Steps:

- a) the Nova Scotia Trails Federation Board and Government Interdepartmental Committee on Trails (GICT), in consultation with the trails community, will draft a terms of reference for the Trails Strategy Coordinating Group. Membership in the TSCG will be broad based and representative of the trails community
- b) the TSCG will then assume responsibility for the strategy and the Trails Strategy Working Group will be disbanded
- c) the TSCG will identify the processes, structures needed to fulfill the role and responsibilities listed above

1.2 Ensure provincial government contributions to trails are efficient and effective

Specific Steps:

- a) review and consolidate government's objectives and commitments related to trails
- b) review the terms of reference for the Interdepartmental Committee on Trails (ICT) so that it can better coordinate and improve government's contribution to trails
- c) ensure the work of ICT is informed by regular conversations with the trails community
- d) improve government legislation, policies, procedures, priorities, structures and practices to better support trails, including:
 - analyzing current resources allocated to trails throughout government
 - ensuring effective governance and structuring of trails work within government
 - identifying and addressing gaps/issues in legislation, regulation and policy
 - reviewing the Trails Act and modify as needed to ensure its relevance
 - addressing outstanding trails-related actions contained in the Off Highway Vehicles in Nova Scotia – Provincial Direction and Action Plan
 - making government processes simpler and more consistent
 - establishing a single portal that brings together information regarding trails (i.e. policies, resources, funding, contacts, etc.) and makes it available online

- strengthening staff commitment, skills and processes to incorporate community development practices
 - aligning policies and funding programs with the strategy and provincial trail priorities
 - creating a system of regional contacts to coordinate government support of trails and provide greater consistency of service
- e) institute a funding model that:
- reflects the many benefits of trails and their role in advancing the objectives and priorities of government
 - provides dedicated sources of funding, allocating them based on clear criteria that are consistent with the goals of the Strategy
 - increases allocations to ongoing management, long term sustainability and the promotion of trails
 - responds to the need for large infrastructure projects such as bridges
 - is administered through a single portal and uses an efficient application process
- f) maintain the trails insurance program
- g) explore opportunities to make government expertise, engineering and inspection services and equipment available to trail developers
- h) maintain consistent and strategic contact with the Government of Canada to raise awareness of how trails in Nova Scotia contribute to federal priorities and assist with the pursuit of funding opportunities

1.3 Expand municipal government engagement in trails

Specific Steps:

- a) partner with the Federation of Nova Scotia Municipalities (FNSM) and the Association of Municipal Administrators (AMA) to raise awareness of the benefits of trails and how they can contribute to the realization of municipal priorities
- b) promote inclusion of trails in existing plans, policies, active community design and Integrated Community Sustainability Plans

- c) review and, where necessary, modify bylaws to support trail development
- d) strengthen partnership with community and trails groups to:
 - assess local needs, benefits and opportunities and use findings to improve trail development and programming
 - pursue the goals and actions outlined in the strategy
- e) provide resources (financial, material, land access, expertise, etc.) that support the development and maintenance of trails

1.4 The Nova Scotia Trails Federation will review its strategic direction in light of the goals, actions and recommended roles contained in the Shared Strategy for Trails

Specific Steps:

- a) The Nova Scotia Trails Federation will establish a working group with fair representation of its full membership, and engage other key stakeholders, to:
 - conduct a strategic review of the Nova Scotia Trails Federation
 - continue to review and define governance structure
 - create and implement a strategic/development/resourcing plan for the Nova Scotia Trails Federation based on the strategic review.

1.5 Clarify the roles, relationships, approaches and processes of the various stakeholders that make up the trails community.

Specific Steps:

- a) clarify and promote the roles of the various trail stakeholders
- b) provide a tool for trails organizations to profile their purposes, plans, approaches, collaborations and successes and share them on-line
- c) find ways for organizations to learn from one another and discover opportunities to work together (e.g. conferences every two years)

GOAL #2

Expand Supports for Trail Development and Management

Engaged, knowledgeable and supported trail developers, managers and groups are essential to an effective trails movement. The following three actions will expand and strengthen the most critical supports needed.

Actions:

2.1 Collect, develop and share resources regarding effective trail development and management

Specific Steps:

- a) develop a systematic and comprehensive approach to collecting, storing and sharing trail data useful to trail developers and managers
- b) develop and provide access to resources to help trail developers and managers to:
 - adopt best practices in community engagement
 - adopt best practices in trail development and management
 - locate and acquire expertise and funding
 - address the most common/prevalent trail issues, e.g. user conflicts

2.2 Increase the number and capabilities of trail developers and managers in the regions

Specific Steps:

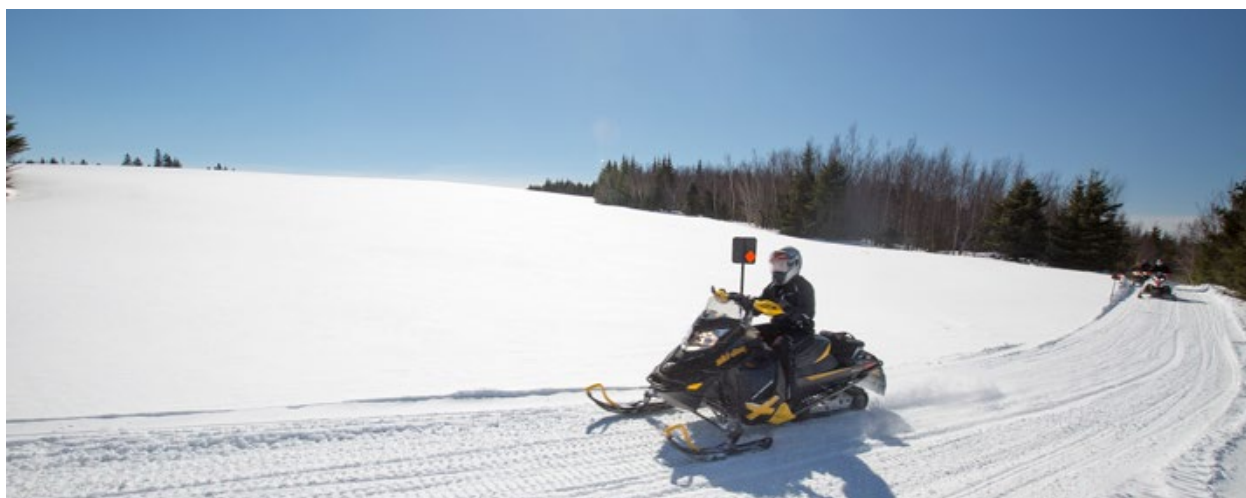
- a) initiate a campaign to get more people interested and involved in the development and management of trails – initially targeting youth, women and young retirees

- b) make it easier for volunteers to get the training they need (e.g. address financial and other barriers, explore partnerships with education providers like colleges and universities, develop governance capabilities within trails organizations)
- c) connect new groups with experienced groups who can share their knowledge and experience

2.3 Diversify, enlarge and stabilize the financial base for trails

Specific Steps:

- a) pursue funding to enable groups to build and manage trails in a sustainable manner, including:
 - taking advantage of all funding opportunities available through municipal, provincial and federal levels of government
 - exploring the potential of new revenue streams such as user-pay systems
 - more strategic allocations of current funds
- b) maintain the Off-Highway Vehicle Infrastructure Fund (OHVIF) program so that it continues to support OHV activities
- c) establish a provincial “fund development” resource to strengthen skills, approaches and tools needed to raise funds
- d) mount a campaign to encourage engagement and investment in trails by the public and private sectors



GOAL #3

Improve the Planning of Trails

Trails and community groups have indicated they need assistance with local trail planning and gaining access to public and private lands and waterways. Whereas planning now occurs primarily at the community level, new approaches and processes will be needed to create regional and provincial plans and priorities. The following three actions will help to improve the planning and sustainability of trails.

Actions:

3.1 Identify, promote and support adoption of the most effective model(s) for trail planning

Specific Steps:

- a) assess current planning practices to identify and share effective models for trail planning
- b) Establish, promote and support the adoption of planning practices that:
 - have proven to work and are relevant for trails organizations across the province
 - incorporate criteria that ensures sustainability and fiscal responsibility
 - help with the creation of local, regional and provincial plans that are consistent and aligned with the strategy
 - identify priority planning, construction and maintenance projects and directs resources accordingly
 - develop a tool for long-term asset planning, monitoring, and management
- c) develop resources and services that raise awareness and facilitate the adoption of the preferred planning practices

3.2 Collect, develop and share resources that support trail planning

Specific Steps:

- a) update and distribute the Trails Manual
- b) establish a way to share planning expertise from the volunteer, government and private sectors
- c) create tools that help communities better understand the needs, experiences and concerns of current and possible new trail users
- d) undertake and share studies that inform trail planning and priority setting, specifically:
 - trail needs/trail use including finding out who is using the trails, how they are being used and the reasons people are not using them
 - the many real benefits that have resulted from trails

3.3 Secure access to strategic lands and waterways for trails

Specific Steps:

- a) collect and share information about how to secure access to lands and waterways
- b) create tools and incentives to secure rights-of-way for trails with property owners (for example easements, tax credits, protection from liability/harm)
- c) develop resources to assist trail builders with land-use and waterway negotiations
- d) work with provincial and municipal governments to make strategic land acquisitions
- e) Establish a mechanism for the review of connectivity issues involving provincially held lands (Crown lands, provincial highways, etc.)



GOAL #4

Increase Trail Use

Ultimately, it is the use and valuing of trails that is most important. The following four actions will improve trail experiences and lead to their increased use.

Actions:

4.1 Promote our trails

Specific Steps:

- a) partner with other organizations to develop, fund and implement a social marketing campaign to raise awareness of the benefits of trails
- b) raise awareness among educators, recreation leaders and outdoor enthusiasts of the role that trails can play as spaces where activities can be organized
- c) encourage more people to use of trails for active transportation
- d) demonstrate how the benefits that arise from trail use relate to the goals of governments, organizations, agencies and businesses
- e) promote the benefits and encourage the locating of amenities and services in close proximity to trails including equipment rental and guiding businesses, interpretive resources, restaurants, and accommodations

4.2 Provide information/resources that support increased trail use

Specific Steps:

- a) expand on current efforts to provide a single, authoritative and up-to-date source of trail information to help the public plan for a good trail experience
 - information includes: trail profile, how to get to them, maps/data to help with finding their way on the trail, interesting things along the way, guidelines about how to use the trail safely and responsibly, contact information, and amenities that are near the trail
 - make information available in a number of forms (on-line, mobile and print)

- b) create a common and simple way to find out about user experiences
- c) develop guidelines for trail signs that:
 - are consistent with guidelines in the updated Trails Manual
 - helps users to find parking, trail heads, amenities that helps them find their way along trails
 - promotes appropriate trail behaviours (etiquette)
 - describes what points or items of interest users might encounter along the trail

4.3 Engage youth in trails

Specific Steps:

- a) trail groups work with schools and youth-serving organizations to
 - raise awareness about how important it is to experience nature and trails ,
 - get students to use trails for fun and to get around so that young people are more active
- b) make it easier for young people to use trails and get involved in trail development

4.4 Promote safe and responsible trail use and strengthen enforcement

Specific Steps:

- a) develop and implement a campaign to promote responsible trail behaviours
- b) identify the most significant enforcement needs (issues and locations)
- c) based on best practices in other jurisdictions, develop appropriate and sustainable approaches to enforcement that includes:
 - expanded roles and responsibilities for government to enforce laws and regulations
 - improved effectiveness of trail patrol programs
 - expanded supports for self-policing by the user community and other groups
 - encouragement of other forms of enforcement that are complementary
 - appropriate sources and levels of funding

Moving Forward:

A Plan of Action

Each group and organization that makes up the trails community will determine where and when to begin moving this strategy forward. Needs, opportunities and resources will affect their choices. As a starting point, we expect that every group will take the time to read through the strategy and think about how their own plans, priorities and activities can line up with, add to, and benefit from the provincial movement.

During the six months following the launch of the strategy:

- a) the Trails Strategy Coordinating Group (TSCG) will be put in place and begin development of a plan to assume responsibility for stewarding the strategy forward
- b) the provincial government and Nova Scotia Trails Federation will develop initial implementation plans and share them with the TSCG
- c) a Provincial Trails Conference be planned to celebrate the launch of the strategy and encourage more discussion about ways to implement priority actions

Plan of Action

The following chart suggests the lead organizations, key stakeholders and timeframe for pursuing the priority actions contained in the strategy.

Goals & Strategic Actions	Lead(s)	Key Partners	Timeline			
			2019	2020	2021	2022-2029
1.1 Establish a Trails Strategy Coordinating Group	NSTF, NSGov	PRO, CG, FN	X	X		
1.2 Ensure Provincial government contributions to trails are efficient and effective	NSGov	TSCG		X	X	X
1.3 Expand municipal government engagement in trail development	MGov, NSGov	TSCG, NSTF, FN		X	X	X
1.4 Review the strategic positioning of the Nova Scotia Trails Federation	NSTF	PRO, CG	X	X		

Goals & Strategic Actions	Lead(s)	Key Partners	Timeline			
			2019	2020	2021	2022-2029
1.5 Clarify the roles, relationships, approaches and processes of the various organizations that make up the trails community	TSCG, NSGov	NGov, PRO, CG, FN	X	X		
2.1 Collect, develop and share resources regarding effective trail development and management	TSCG-WG	NSGov, MGov, PRO, CG, FN		X	X	X
2.2 Increase the number and capabilities of trail developers and managers in the regions	TSCG-WG	MGov, CG NSGov		X	X	X
2.3 Diversify, enlarge and stabilize the financial base for trails	TSCG-WG, NSGov, MGov	NSTF, PRO	X	X	X	X
3.1 Identify, promote and support adoption of the most effective model(s) for trail planning	TSCG-WG, NSGov, MGov	NSTF, PRO, CG, FN		X	X	X
3.2 Collect, develop and share resources that support trail planning	TSCG-WG, NSGov	MGov, NSTF, PRO, CG, FN		X	X	
3.3 Secure access to lands and waterways for trails	TSCG-WG, NSGov, MGov	PRO, CG, FN			X	
4.1 Promote our trails	TSCG-WG, NSGov, MGov	NSTF, PRO, CG	X	X	X	X
4.2 Provide information/resources that support increased trail use	TSCG-WG, NSTF, MGov	PRO, CG, FN		X	X	X
4.3 Engage youth in trails	TSCG-WG, MGov, PRO, CG	NSGov			X	X
4.4 promote safe and responsible trail use and strengthen enforcement	TSCG-WG, NSGov, MGov	PRO, CG, FN		X	X	

TSCG – Trails Strategy Coordinating Group

TSCG-WG – Trails Strategy Coordinating Group Working Group

NSGov – Government of Nova Scotia

MGov – Municipal Governments

NSTF – Nova Scotia Trails Federation

PRO – Provincial Recreation Organizations

CG – Community Groups

FN – Mi'kmaq

Monitoring and Reporting on Progress

The Trail Strategy Coordinating Group has responsibility for developing a systematic approach to monitor and measure progress on the strategy. It will share the results and successes to keep the entire trails community informed, motivated and moving forward together.

The results will be an important source of information for future planning and priority setting. As we move forward, we will continue to ask the trails community for views, guidance and to continue to work together on the evolution of the strategy.



Conclusion:

A Call to Action

Nova Scotia is truly fortunate to have an outstanding trails community. There are passionate, committed and knowledgeable volunteers and professionals involved in the province's trails. There is a rich history and foundation on which to build. There is also a vision and commitment to do even more. The Shared Strategy for Trails in Nova Scotia shows how the trails community can work together, discuss different points of view and agree on a progressive way forward.

This strategy is ambitious but with strong leadership, coordination and investment, it will guide the trails community to successfully realize its vision for trails, contributing to the quality of life of all Nova Scotians.



Appendix I

Glossary of Terms

Active Transportation: any form of human-powered transportation. It is any trip made for the purposes of getting yourself, or others, to a particular destination such as to work, to school, to the store or to visit friends. It can take place on land or water.

Community Development: Community development seeks to remove barriers and empower individuals and groups with the skills they need to set direction and effect change within their communities. It serves to build stronger and more vibrant communities at the grass roots level. This development often takes place when community members come together to take collective action and/or generate solutions to common problems.

Community Trail Groups/Managers: not-for-profit organizations that are formed to build and manage sections of trail near the community where their members live.

Designated Trails: trails that have been designated for use by a particular type of trail user.

Established Trails: taken from the Nova Scotia Trails Act: trails that are located and operate on Crown lands and over watercourses for recreational use and enjoyment or privately owned lands, with the prior consent of the owners or occupiers.

Managed Trails: recreational trails that are managed or operated by a government department, a registered not-for-profit trails organization or an incorporated trail user group. In order to qualify as a managed trail, there must be an agreement between the manager / operator and the landowner that establishes the terms of use of the trail.

Motorized Trails: trails that permit snowmobiles and/or ATVs and/or off-road motorcycles.

Non-Motorized Trails: trails that do not permit snowmobiles, ATVs or off-road motorcycles.

OHV: an abbreviation for an off highway vehicle. Any motorized mode of transportation built for cross-country travel on land, water, snow, ice or marsh or swamp land or on other natural terrain.

Recreation: the experience that results from freely chosen participation in physical, social, intellectual, creative and spiritual pursuits that enhance individual and community wellbeing.

Shared Use Trails: trails that permit more than one type of trail user either at the same time or during different seasons.

Single Use Trails: trails that are designed for use by a single trail user group.

Trans Canada Trail: a national registered charity whose purpose is to promote the completion and use of the Trans Canada Trail, a shared use trail that will run 22,000 kilometres from coast to coast to coast.

Trails Community: all those who have a stake in the development of trails in the province and can include individuals, community groups, provincial organizations, Mi'kmaq communities, businesses, landowners and the various levels of government.

Trails Movement: the results of efforts made by the trails community.

Trail User: anyone who uses a trail in some way.

Trail User Group: a group of trail users who join an organization that is dedicated to pursuing their preferred activity on trails.

Appendix II

Key Factors that Informed the Development of the Strategy

The following are the key factors, identified during the consultations, that informed the development of the strategy:

Current Strengths

Looking ahead, the Shared Strategy for Trails strengthens and capitalizes on:

- a) the many different landscapes, aquatic environments and opportunities for outdoor recreation in Nova Scotia and the desire of more people to spend time in those special places;
- b) the extensive and diverse system of non-motorized, motorized and shared trails across the province – many that are truly exceptional and cared for by local communities and clubs;
- c) the growing understanding of how trails contribute to the health and wellbeing of people, communities and the environment;
- d) the growing importance of some trails and trail systems in connecting communities and enabling people to get from place to place in an active way;
- e) the large number of committed, talented and creative volunteers, professionals and community groups who make up the trails community;
- f) the ongoing multi-year planning carried out by some provincial trail organizations like that of ATVANS and SANS.
- g) the increasing recognition of the role that trails and other outdoor recreational activities can play in tourism and related economic benefits;
- h) the many examples of trail developers and public and private land owners working well together;

- i) the important provincial government support, including the Interdepartmental Committee on Trails (ICT) as a coordinating body for trails work within government;
- j) the growing importance given trails by municipal governments; and
- k) the many ways that trails can contribute to the achievement of public and private sector goals.

Challenges We Need to Address

The trails community in Nova Scotia faces a number of challenges. Many of these are also being experienced in other jurisdictions, both nationally and internationally. The trails community identified the following as the most critical challenges to address through the strategy.

- a) the sustainability of trails through an appropriate funding model
- b) improving support for trail development and management at the community and regional levels
- c) improving government processes and reducing red tape
- d) planning, managing and investing in trails as a provincial system
- e) developing, managing and promoting trails to maximize their use and benefits
- f) improving recruitment and support of volunteers
- g) finding ways that trail groups can work together more
- h) making it easier for people of all abilities to access and use a variety of trails
- i) securing landowner agreements for trails
- j) improving trail connectivity
- k) expanding the information, resources, support services and amenities available for trail users – making trails easier to find, use and enjoy
- l) ensuring safety, security and management of risk for trail users and land owners
- m) increasing enforcement efforts on trails
- n) protecting the environment
- o) acknowledging, celebrating and building upon successes in the trails community

Appendix III

List of Consultations and Documents Used in Development of Strategy

Consultations

1. Nova Scotia Trails Federation Board – regularly throughout process
2. Intergovernmental Committee on Trails – regularly throughout process
3. Consultation with “thought-leaders” regarding trails strategy process – January 2015
4. On-line survey open to all trails stakeholders in the province – open from March 5th to 20th, 2015
5. 8 consultations conducted regionally, 1 conducted with Government, 1 with the Paddling Community, 1 with Provincial organizations – April to June 2015
6. 1 consultation with Health & Wellness Regional Reps - September 2015
7. Series of consultations with MKMPAL's – October 2015
8. Advisory Panels held with 80 “experts” from within the Trails community to flesh out the strategic goals and priorities – October 27th, 2015
9. “Engaging Women and Girls in Trails and the Nova Scotia Trails Movement” – research (survey and workshop) December 2015
10. Survey to enable trails community to review draft strategy and provide feedback – February 2016
11. Consultations with Provincial Recreation Organizations, Mi'kmaq Community, Municipal government representatives, Provincial government departments – 2016-2017
12. Regional consultations with community groups – September 2016

Documents

1. Canadian Trails Study – National Trails Coalition December 2010
2. Trails Strategy for British Columbia – Ministry of Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Operations,
3. Shared Strategy for Recreation in Nova Scotia, 2015
4. A Survey of Nova Scotia Hiking Trail Users – NS Department of Economic Development and Tourism, Nova Scotia Sport and Recreation Commission, Human Resource Development Canada, January 1999
5. Update on the Ontario Trails Strategy, Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport, June 2013
6. Pathway to Success: A Strategy for Trail Development in Saskatchewan – Saskatchewan Trails Association, January 2009
7. Recreation Trails Strategy for British Columbia: Phase 1 – Background Report – Ministry of Tourism, Sport and the Arts, Ministry of Environment, May 2007
8. Saskatchewan Trails Strategy – Ministerial Brief
9. SANS Trail Strategy – Snowmobilers Association of Nova Scotia, December 2013
10. Trails 2010: A Trail Strategy for Colchester County – Municipality of Colchester, February 2005
11. Active2010: Ontario Trails Strategy – Ministry of Health Promotion, 2005
12. Reinvesting in the New Brunswick Trail System: A Long-Term Management Strategy – New Brunswick Department of Natural Resources, 2008
13. Victorian Trails Strategy – Victorian Trails Coordinating Committee (Australia), 2005
14. Trails Tasmania Strategy – Tasmanian Government (Australia), December 2007
15. Final Report of the Voluntary Planning Off-Highway Vehicle Task Force – Voluntary Planning Board, 2004
16. Trails and Integrated Community Sustainability Plans – Service Nova Scotia and Municipal Relations, 2010

Appendix IV

How the Trails Strategy Fits with Other Important Initiatives

There are a large number of initiatives, currently underway or nearing completion, that were taken into account in the development of the Shared Strategy for Trails. Many strive to achieve the same or similar objectives - most are complementary. Some will contribute to the realization of the strategy and some will benefit from and perhaps be shaped by the Strategy.

- the hundreds of community-based activities underway to develop, manage and promote the use of trails
- projects undertaken with support from the Off Highway Vehicle Infrastructure Fund (OHVIF)
- the Snowmobile Association of Nova Scotia Strategic Plan
- ATVANS Multi-year Strategic Plan
- The Nova Scotia Trails Federation Strategic Framework
- Hike Nova Scotia's Strategic Plan
- the Blue Route, Provincial Cycling Network
- the Sustainable Transportation Strategy
- SHIFT: Nova Scotia's Action Plan for an Aging Population
- Let's Get Moving, A Common Vision for Increasing Physical Activity and Reducing Sedentary Living in Canada
- The Accessibility Act, Bill 59
- the National Recreation Framework and the Shared Strategy for Recreation in Nova Scotia
- Parks for ALL: An Action Plan for Canada's Parks Community
- the Natural Resources Strategy
- Nova Scotia's Culture Action Plan: Creativity and Community

- the Parks and Protected Areas Plan
- the Nova Scotia Tourism Strategy
- the Destination Trails program
- the One Nova Scotia Action Plan
- the Trans Canada Trail
- the Cape-to-Cape Trail
- the International Appalachian Trail

