

Mount Gardner Visitor Use Management Framework

Project Plan

Recreation Sites and Trails BC

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1.0 Overview

1.1 Project Purpose:

Engage with local indigenous communities and the community of Bowen Island to inform the development of a visitor use management framework within Mount Gardner Recreation Site. Outputs of the planning process are solely recommendations and will be considered in a statutory decision-making process, separate from the planning process and dependent on resource availability.

1.2 Background

The project is exclusive to the Mt. Gardner Recreation Site, which was established (S.56 of *FRPA*) in 2018 with the goal of working with local partnership agreement holders to maintain the existing trail system. The recreation site ranges from sea level on the western side, to the peak of Mount Gardner (See Figure 1 for map of recreation site). The recreation site comprises a large majority of crown lands on Bowen Island and falls within the boundaries of the Bowen Island Municipality and the Islands Trust.

Once the Recreation Site was established, Recreation Sites and Trails developed a three-year partnership Agreement with local trail societies to manage the trails within the site. Prior to the expiry of this agreement in 2021, the partnership agreement holders were Bowen Trails Rider Association, Bowen Island Trails Society, and the Bowen Island Horse Owners and Riders Association.

Over the last two years, Recreation Sites and Trails has been aware of increasing interest in the management of recreation use of the trails in the recreation site. Concerns pertaining to the degradation of non-motorized recreation user experience, safety, and water quality from motorized use have been raised.

In 2021, the Bowen Island Municipality passed a resolution requesting that the Statutory Decision Maker for Mt. Gardner Recreation Site impose regulation to restrict motorized recreation in the entirety of the recreation site. In response to this resolution developed by the Bowen Island Municipality, the regional manager of Recreation Sites and Trails, made the decision following decision:

“RSTBC with assistance from the recreational user groups will create a non-motorized recreation experience within the Mount Gardner Recreation Site, leading from a highway vehicle accessible trailhead to the summit of Mount Gardner. The summit ridge of Mount Gardner is to provide a non-motorized recreation experience”

Informed by this decision, and direction from organizational executive, RSTBC staff will be complete a comprehensive planning process for the entirety of the Mount Gardner Recreation

Site utilizing the *Visitor Use Management Framework* (described below). This process will consider the direction of the 2021 decision, while also reviewing recreation use throughout the entirety of the site. This comprehensive planning process commenced in the Spring of 2021 and will ensure that recommendations to the statutory decision maker will be informed by engagement with indigenous communities, stakeholders and the citizenry of Bowen Island.

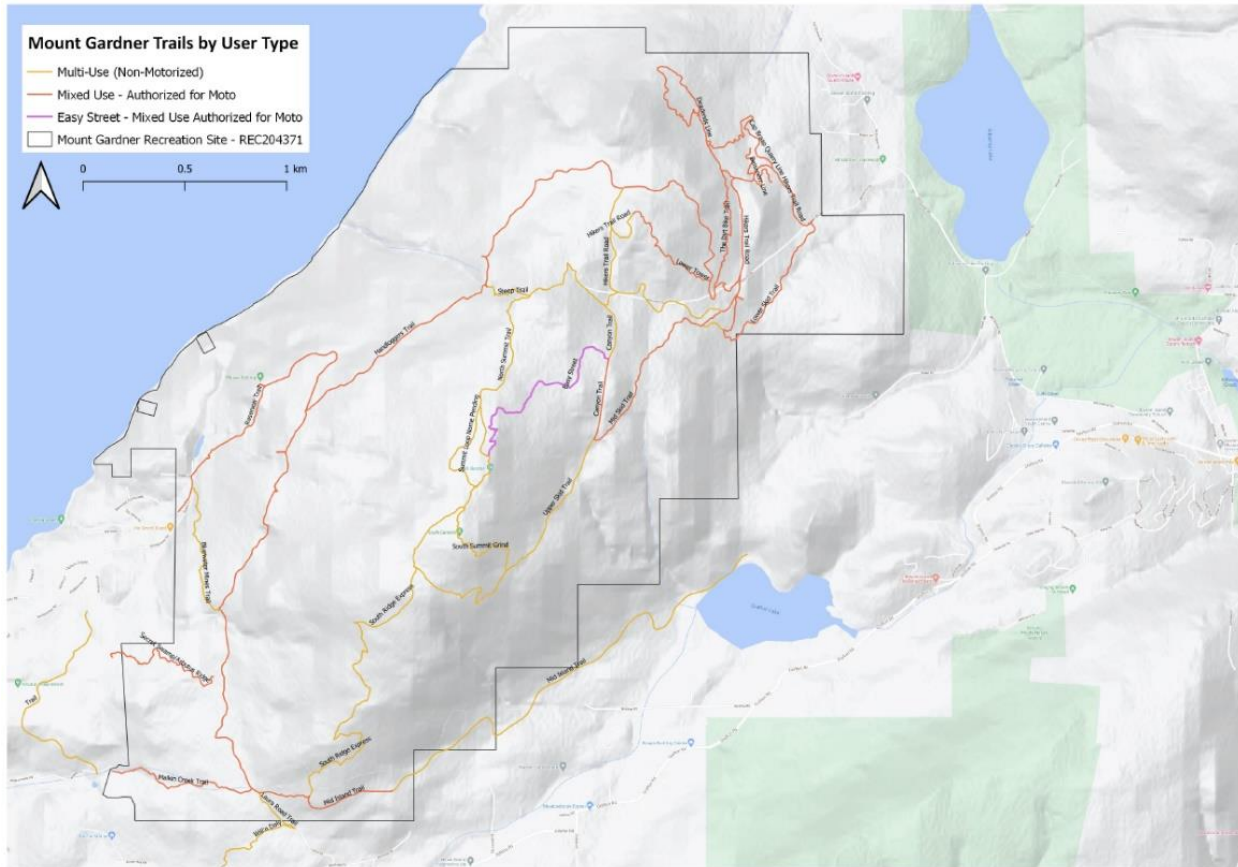


Figure 1: Map of Mount Gardner Recreation Site.

1.3 Project Objectives

- 1) Develop and implement a transparent planning and engagement process for local indigenous communities and the community of Bowen Island to inform recommendations about recreational use of trails on the recreation site.
 - a. Engage with local First Nations to ensure their values and long-term vision for the lands is incorporated to the extent they wish to be involved.
 - b. Planning process to be based upon structured decision-making principles
 - c. Clear communications with stakeholders
 - d. Clear, identifiable outputs of the process
- 2) Draft recommendations for statutory decision based on input from this process.

1.4 Scope

In Scope	Out of Scope
Process - Engagement with First Nation Communities	Recreation use of private lands, parks or protected areas, other crown lands, or urban areas of Bowen Island
Geographic Area - Mount Gardner Recreation site	Adventure Tourism
Use Management - Public recreational uses that can be managed through RSTBC legislation, regulation, and policy	Adjustment to existing higher-level land-use plans
Information Gathering - Assessing and summarizing existing information and current conditions for the project area	Identification of all existing cultural values within the project area; any list or representation of values or sites created should not be seen as exhaustive or static
Recommendations - Defining appropriate visitor activities	
Recommendations - Creation of monitoring strategy for the project area	
Process - Identification of, and engagement with, external stakeholders and the public	

2.0 Process Tools

The planning process will follow the guidance of the Visitor Use Management Framework for overall process flow. In addition, structured decision making will be used at various engagement steps to facilitate discussion and reach solutions.

2.1 Visitor Use Management Framework:

The Interagency Visitor Use Management Council was chartered in the USA in 2011. A coalition between six federal agencies—the Bureau of Land Management, National Forest Service, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, National Park Service, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service—their vision was to provide “a unified voice for excellence in visitor use management on [the USA’s] federally managed lands and waters to sustain resources and quality visitor experiences¹.”

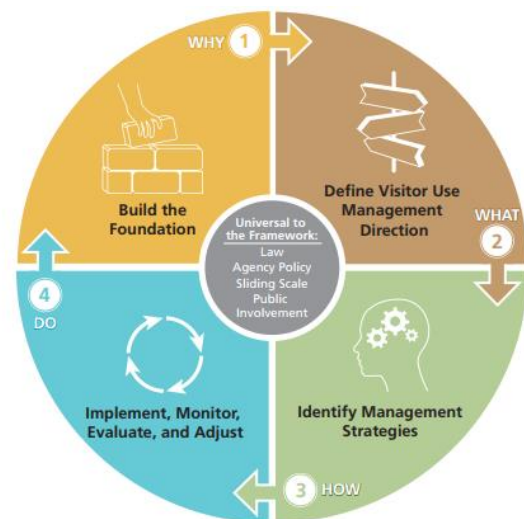


Figure 1: The four elements of the VUM framework

¹ <https://visitorusemanagement.nps.gov>

In 2016, with the goal of increasing awareness of and commitment to proactive, professional, and science-based visitor use management, the Council released the Visitor Use Management Framework. In the words of the Council, “The purpose of the framework is to provide cohesive guidance on four major elements for analyzing and managing visitor use on federally managed lands and waters. It is also intended to provide a legally defensible, transparent decision-making process that meets law and policy requirements, ensures agency accountability, and provides sound rationales upon which to base management decisions and actions².” In short, it gives destinations of all sizes the ability to tackle visitor use management issues, cohesively and consistently.

The framework is comprised of four elements, broken down into 14 steps to guide the planning process, with a sliding scale of analysis to determine resource allocation based on the complexity of the project and the consequences of the decision. These steps are listed in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Steps of the Visitor Use Management Framework

Element	Step		Outcome
Build the Foundation	1.1	Clarify project purpose & need	Understand why the project is needed, and develop the project approach
	1.2	Review the area’s purpose and applicable legislation, agency policies, and other management direction	
	1.3	Assess & summarize existing information and current conditions	
	1.4	Develop a project action plan	
Define Visitor Use Management Direction	2.1	Define desired conditions for project area	Describe the conditions to be achieved or maintained and how conditions will be tracked over time
	2.2	Define appropriate visitor activities, facilities, services	
	2.3	Select indicators & establish thresholds	
Identify Management Strategies	3.1	Compare & document differences between existing and desired conditions	Identify strategies to manage visitor use to achieve or maintain desired conditions
	3.2	Identify management strategies and actions to achieve desired conditions	

² U.S. Interagency Visitor Use Management Council, 2016. Visitor Use Management Framework: vi.

	3.3	Where necessary, identify visitor capacities and additional strategies to manage use levels within capacities	
	3.4	Develop a monitoring strategy	
Implement, Monitor, Evaluate, Adjust	4.1	Implement management actions	Implement management strategies and actions, and adjust based on monitoring and evaluation
	4.2	Conduct & document ongoing monitoring	
	4.3	Adjust management actions if needed to achieve desired conditions, and document rationale	

2.2 Structured Decision Making

Structured decision making (SDM) is an organized approach to understanding complex problems, developing, and evaluating creative alternatives, building a shared understanding of key trade-offs and uncertainties, and making defensible choices. Designed with groups in mind, it pays special attention to the challenges and pitfalls that can trap people working together on hard problems.

Instead of employing traditional mechanisms of decision making (i.e. Consensus building), This project will employ a structured decision making approach to frame issues, and reach resolution amongst different opinions. More information on structured decision making can be found on the internet.



Figure 2: Steps of Structured Decision

3.0 Project Process

The planning process will draw on the tools from the Visitor Use Management Framework (VUMF) to recommend a set of management measures for development and implementation regarding use management within the Mt. Gardner Recreation Site.

3.1 Major Deliverables

The major deliverables for the project will guide the approach, order, and project process. The following deliverables will be:

Summary of Element 1 (Build the Foundation):

- Identify important cultural values, sites, and resources
- The project team will synthesize available information on current conditions and public use
- Identify issues, and concerns
- Conduct and summarize community engagement
 - Interviews with interested First Nations
 - Interviews with Stakeholder groups, municipality, and key knowledge holders
 - Phone interview.
- Comprehensive Trail inventory and assessment*
- Completion of Archeological Overview Assessment*
- Develop a comprehensive project area map(s) reflecting important cultural values, recreation opportunities, and important ecological values and wildlife habitat areas.

* Some deliverables from Element 1 will occur concurrently with Element 2 items. This is due to resource considerations and limiting the volume of travel to the project site.

Summary of Element 2 (Define Visitor Use Management Direction)

- Working with local First Nations, the municipality, stakeholders and, use Structured Decision Making to:
 - develop desired conditions statements for visitor use in the project area
 - Acceptable and appropriate activities
 - Identification of indicators and thresholds and explain acceptable levels of change to values and resources

Summary of Element 3 (Identify Management Strategies)

- The Government project team will develop and recommended management strategies and actions for the project area.
 - Components will include:
 - regulation
 - Monitoring strategy
 - Where / if applicable Identify visitor capacity
 - Additional strategies to manage use (i.e. Education, engineering)
- Conduct community engagement on recommended management strategies
 - Interviews and consultations with First Nations
 - In person community open house (pending COVID restrictions)
 - Interviews with stakeholder groups via phone
 - Public engagement survey

- Informed by Indigenous and public consultation, finalize the Mount Gardner Visitor Use Management Framework

Implementation of VUMF – subject to decision and resourcing

- Implement the Visitor Use Management Framework using the outcomes of the above planning components.
 - Advancing recommendations for regulation to the decision maker
 - Implement monitoring strategy – subject to resourcing
 - Evaluate for success – subject to resourcing

3.2 Milestone

The major milestones for the project are listed below, with tentative target dates:

Milestone	Target Date
Begin background work for Element 1	January and February 2022
Pre-Engagement Materials Sent to First Nations	February 2022
Pre-Engagement with First Nations concludes	May 2022
<p><i>Element 1 (build the foundation):</i></p> <p>Stakeholder and Indigenous Community Interviews (30m – 1 hr):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Why do you like recreating in the Mount Gardner Recreation Site? - Describe how your group utilizes the Mount Gardner Recreation Site. Including staging areas and trailheads, general directions of travel - Could you briefly describe the value, experience, or associated challenge with each trail? What makes it unique? Is it one of a kind? <p>Field work (completed in June):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Complete trail assessment to categorized “current state” of trail system 	April - June 2022
<p><i>Element 2: Define Visitor Use Management Direction</i></p> <p>Stakeholder workshop</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Develop desired conditions statements for visitor use in the project area - Acceptable and appropriate activities 	June 2022

- Identification of indicators and thresholds and explain acceptable levels of change to values and resources	
<i>Element 3: Identify proposed management solutions</i> BC Government internal workshop: - Using summarized information from Phase 1 and, 2, develop proposed management solutions, in a draft VUMF	September 2022
<i>Element 3 Engagement on proposed management actions</i> <i>Indigenous Community and Public engagement</i> - Interviews and overview presentation with interested first nations, stakeholders, and the municipality - Public engagement open house. - 4 weeklong online survey for the public	October 2022
<i>Element 3: Finalize Recommended management actions</i> • BC government Internal workshop to use summarized engagement feedback to inform and finalize VUMF	November 2022
<i>Element 4: Progress towards implementation</i> • Develop decision packaged for statutory Decision • Identify Resourcing	November 2022
Proposed Project Completion Date:	December 2022; ongoing

4.0 Engagement Spectrum and Participants

The International Association of Public Participation (IAP2) is the preeminent international organization advancing the practice of public and stakeholder participation. In addition to training and capacity building, IAP2 has established standards of practice and core values to guide public and stakeholder engagement.

4.1 IAP2 core values of public participation

1. Public participation is based on the belief that those who are affected by a decision have a right to be involved in the decision-making process.
2. Public participation includes the promise that the public's contribution will influence the decision.
3. Public participation promotes sustainable decisions by recognizing and communicating the needs and interests of all participants, including decision makers.

4. Public participation seeks out and facilitates the involvement of those potentially affected by or interested in a decision.
5. Public participation seeks input from participants in designing how they participate.
6. Public participation provides participants with the information they need to participate in a meaningful way.
7. Public participation communicates to participants how their input affected the decision.

IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation



4.2 Project Lead

Participant category	Description	Participants
Project Lead	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High level of influence on the project and highly impacted by the project • Commitment is required for the project to succeed • Decision-making within the VUMF planning process 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ministry of Environment and Climate Change Strategy, Recreation Sites and Trails Branch

4.3 Indigenous Communities

Nine local Indigenous communities were engaged prior to the commencement of stakeholder engagement to identify their level of interest in the participation in the planning process. At this time, no Indigenous community has expressed interest in co-sponsoring or partnering on the implementation of this VUMF. The opportunity for partnership will remain throughout the VUMF planning process should the interests change. Communication, and engagement with interested indigenous communities will occur throughout each element of the planning process.

4.4 External Groups, Stakeholders, and knowledge holders

In keeping with IAP2 values, those who are affected by a decision have the right to be involved in the decision-making process and a clear promise needs to be made by the decision maker about how the input received by first nations, stakeholders and the public will influence the decision. Table 5 below identifies the stakeholders that have the potential to be impacted by the plan and outlines the level of engagement on the IAP2 spectrum of participation each will be engaged at. Please note that Indigenous Communities have been deliberately left out of this table. Opportunities for partnership, and collaboration on the project will remain based on the interest of each Indigenous community.

Target communities of Interest	Level of Engagement	Promise to the “Public”
Bowen Island Trails Society	Involve	We will look to you for advice and innovation and incorporate this in decision as much as possible.
Bowen Trail Riders Association		
Bowen Island Horse Owners and Riders Association		
Bowen Island Conservancy		
Bowen Island Nature Club		
Bowen Community and Nature		
Parks, Trails, and Greenways Advisory Committee		
Environment and Climate Action Advisory Committee		
Bowen Island Municipality		

Tourism Bowen Island		
General Public	Consult	We will listen to you and work to address your concerns to the extent possible.
Island Trust		
Adventure Tourism Tenure Holders (through BC's Land Act)		
Metro Vancouver Parks		
Local Member of the Legislative Assembly	Inform	We will keep you informed.
Municipal Councilors		