

WAPITI SKI HILL RESORT MASTER PLAN

Addendum #1 - Mountain Bike Trail Plan

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Introduction and Purpose

This addendum is intended to expand upon information provided in the Wapiti Ski Hill Resort Master Plan (the “RMP”), with a specific focus on all-season use and mountain biking. Mountain biking is identified in section 2.2.5 of the RMP as a desired future use of the resort for Phase 1 (1-5 Years). The Mountain Bike Trail Plan is a key next step in the Project Vision of Wapiti Resort for continuing the “growth and sustainability of the mountain, moving toward all-season use.”

Mountain biking has become increasingly popular in Elkford in recent years as evidenced by the creation of the Elkford Trails Alliance, development of new trails (separate from the Wapiti Resort area) and the popularity of a new bike jump and skills park constructed in summer of 2022. The Elkford Trails Alliance was started in 2020 and has designed and built two trails in the Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtle network near Josephine Falls and Lost Lake, with three more in the construction stage and more in the design stage.

As the Wapiti Resort is located right beside the community of Elkford as shown in Figure 1, this trail network is designed to lean on elements of play and challenge for its significance. Riders who reach the top of the Resort will be rewarded with great views of the town of Elkford, the valley and the local industry.

These trails are presented as no fee trails, free to use for the public.

Mountain Biking in the Region

Mountain biking is an extremely popular summer activity in nearby communities like Fernie and Crowsnest Pass. In 2020, Tourism Fernie reported¹ that 46% of visitors had mountain biked local trails, and that summer tourism has been growing faster than the traditionally winter-dominated tourism in Fernie. The neighbouring community of Sparwood has also been investing in trail infrastructure, with the Sparwood Trails Alliance maintaining 35 km of trails and continuing to add new trails. Without coordinated effort, the individual work of these communities has begun to create a regional mountain bike tourism product, where a visitor could choose any one community as a “home base”, and then experience the offerings of three other communities all within a 45-minute drive.

Elkford needs to act now to take this opportunity and solidify itself as a regional player in the significant mountain bike tourism market. With the existing Operating Agreement in place, Wapiti Resort represents the best opportunity to build on local mountain biking opportunities to develop a distinct mountain bike experience that draws regional and further afield riders looking for new trails and experiences.

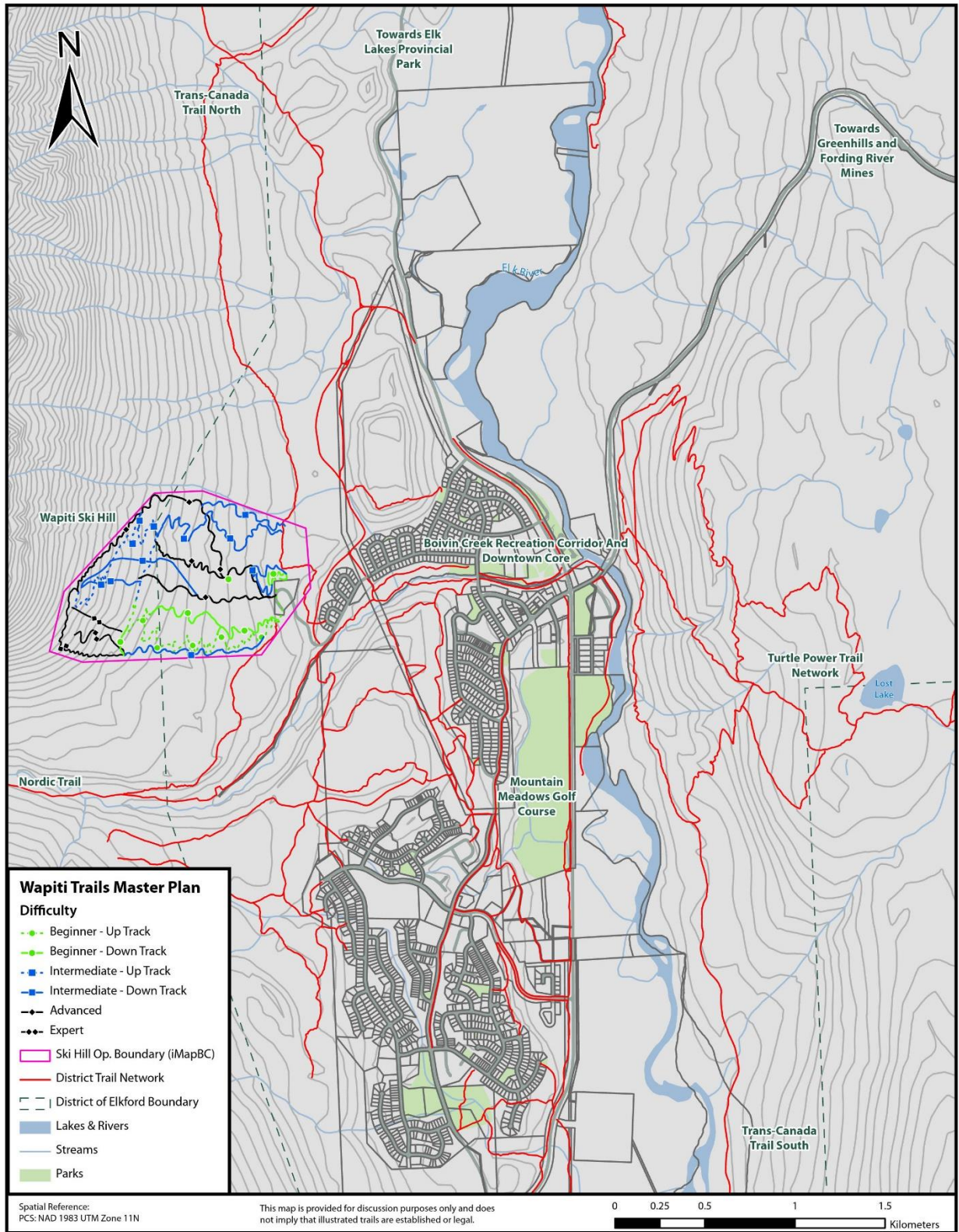


Figure 1: Wapiti Resort within the District's Trail Network

Vision

To provide local and visiting riders with a unique downhill mountain bike experience that reflects Elkford's wilderness character and is regionally significant.

Objectives

1. To create a network that provides at least one option for riders of all abilities, from beginner to expert.
2. To create a signature trail that is regionally distinct.

Plan Summary

This Trail Plan was developed in partnership with the Elkford Trails Alliance and support from the Wapiti Ski Club. Plan development included:

- Initial review of available GIS data for obvious environmental features and slope.
- Site visits with expert advice used in aligning the climb trail and confirming locations of downhill trail options.
- Refinement of trail alignment from review of sensitive habitat, environmental features, and other layers of significance.

The Plan includes:

- A beginner level climb trail, trail #1, to Tower 7. The climb trail is a "shared-use" trail, appropriate for hikers and riders alike.
- A range of downhill tracks beginner to expert from Tower 7. To avoid user conflict, the downhill trails are considered mountain bike only and signage will be designed to inform and educate users.
- A shared-use blue level climb trail, trail #9, above Tower 7 to the top of the existing operation.
- A range of downhill tracks from advanced to expert from the top of the existing operation down to the Tower 7 elevation.
- Collectively a variety of trails for riders of all abilities and preferences, including both technical and flow trails.

Future Access – T-Bar

As referenced in the RMP, there is also future possibility of adapting the existing T-Bar to hold mountain bikes. T-Bars are used for this purpose in other regions, including Sweden and Scotland. Different products exist to adapt a T-Bar for this purpose, and some regions also use the T-Bar un-adapted. This would involve putting more operating hours on the existing lift, likely introducing new maintenance demands and upgrade requirements over time. The District will work together with operators to consider implications for this use. This option will continue to be evaluated as the year-round use of the Wapiti Resort develops and more demand is created.

Future Access – Shuttle

Some bike parks such as Coast Gravity (Sechelt, B.C.) and Legacy (Montana, U.S.) include paid vehicle shuttle access to attract riders and provide low effort elevation for descent-focused riding. Access roads existing within the Resort were constructed to reach utility infrastructure, which could be utilized for shuttle service with some upgrading. This option will need to be further evaluated for potential impacts to wildlife and the environment.

Future Accommodation – Camping

The RMP section 2.2.8 refers to the potential for the parking area to accommodate overnight parking for RVs. As the use of the Wapiti Resort expands to allseason, the demand for overnight camping accommodation will increase. The use of a portion of the parking area for this purpose would provide users a convenient location to stay and use the trails for several days. Creation of this use would require:

- Development of policies and procedures for camping;
- Considerations, education and mitigation measures for managing potential for wildlife conflict in the evening;
- Water and liquid/solid waste management infrastructure;
- Amenity considerations including waste bins, cooking facilities, possible shade structures, and access to washroom facilities.
- A camping operation plan will be developed to explore these issues in more detail and develop a more detailed plan for this use.

Trail Phasing Plan and Descriptions

The trail development will occur in phases dependant on resources and funding. The Mountain Bike Trail Plan is presented below, and the phases of development are as follows:

Phase 1 – Anticipated in 2024

The trails proposed in this Plan as shown in Figure 2, are anticipated to be constructed over a medium/long-term time scale, depending on the availability of funding sources and the popularity of the trails. The first priority is to construct the beginner uphill trail to Tower 7 and one to two beginner/intermediate downhill options.

Beginner Trails (Green level difficulty)

- Trail 1 – Uphill trail for shared-use between hikers and mountain bikers. Target a maximum trail bed width of 100 cm to be wide enough for beginners and manage higher traffic as the only uphill option.
- Trail 2/3 – Downhill green flow trail designed with a smooth trail bed and minimal disruptions. May include some simple progression elements like rollers and slightly bermed corners. Likely a machine-built trail.

Intermediate Trails (Blue level difficulty)

- Trail 10 – Downhill blue flow trail designed with a smooth trail bed and progressive flow features, such as rollers, tabletop jumps, optional smaller gap jumps, medium size berm corners, and possibly wooden features. Likely a machine-built trail.
- Trail 12 – Downhill singletrack style blue technical trail with a narrower trail bed and few features but may include berm corners and minimal flow elements.

Phase 2 – Anticipated in 2025/2026

Phase 2 of the development will continue to diversify the trail offerings within the Resort area and move to higher elevation and steeper terrain. This will include development of an intermediate climb trail (trail #9) and creating greater a diversity of difficult downhill options.

Intermediate Trails (Blue level difficulty)

- Trail 9 – Uphill trail for shared-use between hikers and mountain bikers. Target a maximum trail bed width of 100 cm to be wide enough for intermediate riders and manage higher traffic as the only uphill option.
- Trail 8 – Downhill blue flow trail utilizing natural terrain features for a unique experience and generally including a smooth trail bed and progressive flow features, such as rollers, hips, optional smaller gap jumps, medium size berm corners, and possibly use of wooden features. Likely a machine-built trail.

Difficult Trails (Black level difficulty)

- Trail 13 – A top-to-bottom black trail with segments alternating between flow and technical trail style.

Very Difficult Trails (Double-black level difficulty)

- Trail 4 – A short down hill, very difficult trail with a unique steep angle.

Consideration: should demand warrant, this Phase of the project could include more detailed considerations for the overnight use of the parking lot area for camping.

Phase 3 – 2027 onward

Phase 3 of the Plan will round out the trail offerings to complete the remainder of trails as presented. Trail types will be finalized closer to the implementation of this stage but will continue to diversify the offerings and provide more options for all rider types. Phase 3 would include the kids corner area, which is expected to be a skills area involving low angle jumps and skills features.

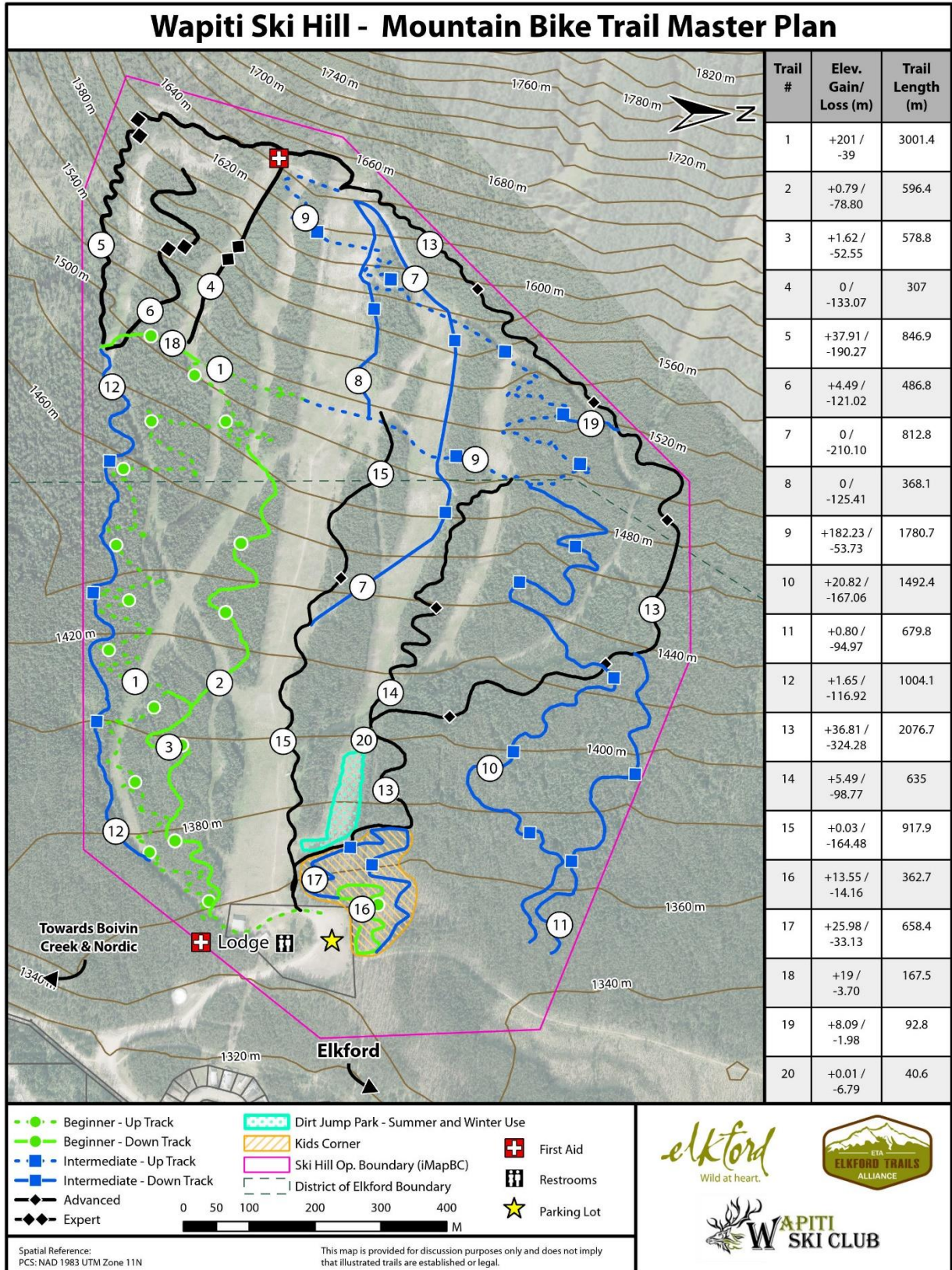


Figure 2: Wapiti Mountain Bike Trail Master Plan. Proposed trail alignments are subject to field adjustments and refinement.

PLAN ALIGNMENT

This Mountain Bike Trail Plan was designed to align with the RMP and Operating Agreement as described further in this section. The Plan will be in alignment with all requirements of the Operating Agreement as well as those described in this section.

Wapiti Resort Master Plan

Section 2.2.5 of the RMP identifies downhill mountain biking as a desired future use of the resort for Phase 1 (1-5 Years). The RMP suggests this development could occur over time, rely on volunteer support, and eventually involve jumps, features, and potentially adaptations to the T-Bar lift for this purpose.

This Plan expands on this vision with specific trails with potential incorporation of jumps and features, potential for future use of the T-Bar, and a trail phasing strategy. The Plan was developed with volunteer support from the Elkford Trails Alliance.

ENVIRONMENTAL AND CULTURAL VALUES

Fish Values

As per section 3.1 of the Master Plan, any trail development of the Wapiti Mountain Resort will utilize the Streamside Protection Act and Riparian Area Regulations to help develop this project in such a way that any harmful effects to Boivin Creek or the surrounding riparian area are prevented or mitigated to preserve the downstream fishery. Currently, there is no planned trail development in riparian areas or water features/streams.

Water Values

The Wapiti Resort is adjacent to Boivin Creek, a designated community watershed (Code 349.003). The RMP refers to the need for studies for the impact and recommendations related to using water from Boivin Creek for the operation of the Resort. There may be a desire to utilize a non-potable water source for maintenance and construction activity (i.e. wetting dirt for shaping). Should the year-round operation require a non-potable water source, appropriate environmental studies will be conducted pursuant to section 3.2 of the RMP.

Wildlife Values

As per section 3.3 of the Master plan, there are several species including elk, deer, black bear, grizzly bear, cougar, and moose that reside in the area. The resort area is also within the critical habitat area of the American Badger *jeffersonii subspecies*, an endangered species at risk. As the resort will be expanding to all-seasons use, with increased mountain bike development, the District of Elkford will consider best practices for conflict and impact management from resources including the Trail Development Guidelines to Minimize Disturbance to and Conflict with Large Carnivores – Outdoor Recreation Council of BC. This will include, but is not limited to:

- Educational elements on signage and Resort website about potential wildlife interaction;
- Attractant minimization including placement of wildlife resistant waste bins in the base area;

- Potential for seasonal trail closures as necessary to reduce risk of conflict during sensitive times (i.e. spring, nighttime).

Forest Health & Wildfire Protection

Within the CRA there are areas identified as having risk for wildfire spread. There are two areas within the CRA that are identified in the District’s 2017 Community Wildfire Protection Plan as potential treatment areas, being CI-9 and CI-3. CI-9 received fuel mitigation treatment from 2020-2023. Neither of these treatment areas reach to western (higher elevation) edges of the CRA. With increased traffic during summer months, the risk of human-caused ignition will increase and as a result measures will be considered to mitigate this increased risk. Measures will be defined in the Operations Handbook.

Within the CRA there are potential occurrences of Whitebark pine, which is an endangered species at risk and an important keystone species in high elevation ecosystems in BC. The District of Elkford will consider best management practices specific to Whitebark pine in trail planning and development including field identification, avoidance where possible, training of trail builders/field workers, and using buffers

Archaeological Assessments

The District of Elkford will engage with First Nations to determine when archaeological assessments are undertaken in advance of land altering activities.

TRAIL BUILDING BEST PRACTICES

This Plan was developed with input from the Elkford Trails Alliance and Backcountry Trail Experts, a local professional trail building company based out of Fernie. The IMBA Guidelines for a Quality Trail Experienceⁱⁱ and Whistler Trail Standardsⁱⁱⁱ were also consulted.

The building and maintenance of trails will follow best practices to reduce wildlife conflict, manage terrain and slope stability, and eliminate/minimize/mitigate environmental impacts. Prior to land disturbance, the following will be undertaken:

- Archaeological assessment as required;
- Incorporate the Environmental Mitigation Policy as required;
- Development of a Sediment and Erosion Control Plan;
- Development of an Operations Handbook, including:
 - Trail development standards/best practices (i.e. Whistler Trail Standards)
 - Wildlife mitigation strategies during construction and operation of the trails
 - Ecosystem management (i.e. whitebark pine identification/best practices)
 - Wildfire mitigation strategies
 - Safety plan and procedures
- Use of Qualified Environmental Professionals as needed to oversee detailed design and trail construction.
- Development of a signage plan to include:
 - Master Trail Plan map;
 - Wayfinding/trailhead & difficulty signage;

- Safety considerations (i.e. from CWSAA);
- Educational components for interaction/conflict avoidance with wildlife.

Three components of trail sustainability have been considered.

1. Environmental Sustainability

The majority of the proposed network occurs in un-harvested areas outside of existing ski runs. As such, an amount of cutting will be required. The trails will be designed and maintained to minimize environmental disruption (i.e. by avoiding visible drainage areas). Trails are a mix of singletrack and machine-built. Trails will be constructed in accordance with the Sediment and Erosion Control Plan.

2. Social Sustainability

With a range of trail offerings, the Plan is intended to provide options for riders of all abilities. Elkford's mountain bike trail network continues to develop and this is an opportunity to expand the network before it gets overcrowded. The Plan is meant to compliment existing assets (i.e. Bike Jump and Skills Park, Josephine and Lost Lake trails), rather than compete with those assets.

The Resort area gets minimal use outside of the winter months, however there is some informal use by hikers and dog walkers. The introduction of mountain bike trails is intended to be done in harmony with existing users. Signage will be designed to communicate intended users for different trails.

3. Economic Sustainability

The District of Elkford has a partnership with the Elkford Trails Alliance for assistance with maintenance on trails over District property. The District and Trails Alliance have begun discussions around the possible expansion of that agreement to the trails in this Plan. The District's Community & Facility Services department currently maintain several trails, however in the early stages the trails described in this Plan would be maintained largely by volunteer effort. Volunteer work will be guided by the documents and plans described at the start of this section.

The District of Elkford will be seeking grant and funding support from external sources for the construction of the trails but may include capital budget where feasible.

ⁱ Fernie's Tourism Master Plan, Tourism Fernie - https://tourismfernie.com/uploads/documents/5/FINAL2020TourismMasterPlan_FernieBC.pdf

ⁱⁱ Guidelines for a Quality Trail Experience, International Mountain Bicycling Association - <https://www.imba.com/resource/guidelines-quality-trail-experience-gqte>

ⁱⁱⁱ Whistler Trail Standards, Resort Municipality of Whistler - https://www.mbta.ca/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/trail_standards_first_edition.pdf