

StrongerBC Future Leaders—Recreation Crew Program 2021

In 2021, the Recreation Crew Program expanded across the province. With two different funding sources, there was a total of 21 crews with 90 positions.

Recreation Sites and Trails (RSTBC) has been partnering with Columbia Basin Trust since 2019 in a cost-sharing arrangement to have Recreation Crews within the Columbia Basin (Cranbrook, Invermere, Nelson). In the fall of 2020, the program expanded to three additional districts with funding from Treasury Board. Using these experiences as pilot projects, in spring 2021, RSTBC received funding to hire crews for the entire province (21 locations—3 in the Columbia Basin, and 18 under Stronger BC funding).

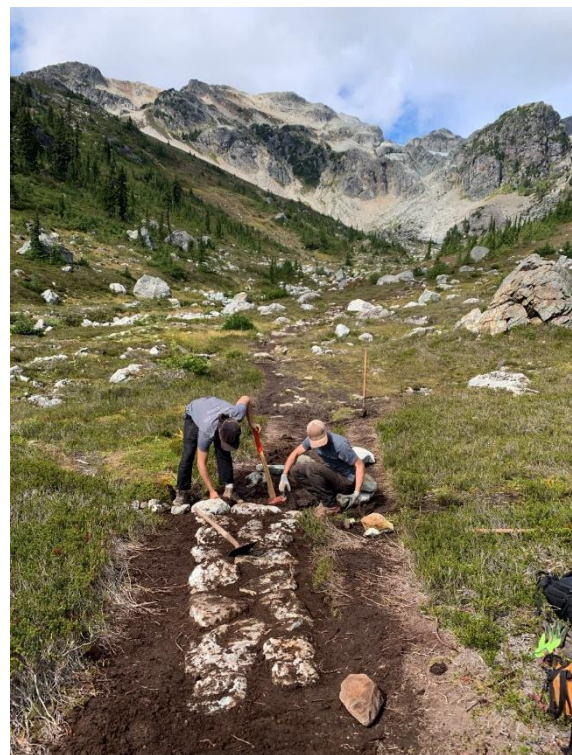
The Stronger BC crews started work in June. All staff were provided training to complete a variety of projects. Some training was delivered by RSTBC staff, some was provided by professionals. Training included chainsaw operations, basic carpentry, driving on resource roads, trail building, safety check-in systems, spatial data collection, bear awareness, danger tree awareness, and much more.

Most crews consisted of one crew leader and three crew members. Each crew had two trucks, as well as tools and equipment. Crews would complete projects such as replacing or repairing picnic tables, outhouses, signage, and fire rings. They would clear trails of deadfall and brush, as well as building trail re-routes for damaged areas. They replaced bridges and boardwalks and built stairs to prevent erosion. Crews travelled to the far reaches of their districts, as they had the flexibility of long work days and the ability to camp overnight to complete projects.

Overall, crews completed an incredible amount of work. The recreation crews provided recreation staff with another tool with which to manage their sites and trails. Crews fill a particular niche, where partnership agreement holders are limited because they are volunteers, and maintenance contractors are limited by RSTBC's operational budget.

Not only did crews provide RSTBC with labour, but they gained work experience, personal development, and career opportunities. Employees developed soft skills, such as teamwork, problem solving, flexibility, and leadership skills. They also developed a multitude of hard skills, such as chainsaw operating, carpentry, and trail building. Some have even gone on to work with Compliance and Enforcement, BC Timber Sales, BC Parks, and within Recreation Sites and Trails BC.

The program in 2021 was a success: immense amounts of work was completed at recreation sites and trails in every district, and many employees gained valuable experience that will hopefully equip them with skills to pursue a career in recreation management.



Recreation crew armours the popular Brandywine Alpine Meadow Trail.