

To: Regional and Corporate Services Committee
From: David Urban, Manager of Outdoor Recreation Planning

Date: 2020-01-14
File No: 1855-20-Outdoor Rec

Subject: Outdoor Recreation Planning Update

RECOMMENDATION

THAT the Fraser Valley Regional District Board invite Destination BC to present to the Board about both of their Destination Development Strategies related to the Fraser Valley and Gold Rush Trail.

STRATEGIC AREA(S) OF FOCUS

Foster a Strong & Diverse Economy
Support Environmental Stewardship

PRIORITIES

Priority #4 Tourism
Priority #5 Outdoor Recreation

BACKGROUND

Destination BC (DBC) is a provincial Crown corporation that leads the marketing of British Columbia as a tourist destination and promotes the development and growth of the provincial tourism industry. In 2017, DBC began undertaking destination development strategies across the province. These ten year strategies were undertaken to provide a common vision for growth and investment with tourism industry partners. They serve to guide experience development initiatives and enable the development of compelling tourist experiences that match visitor expectations and position the province as a premier tourist destination.

The DBC's Fraser Valley and Gold Rush Trail strategies cover our region (see Appendix A and B) and were released late last year. These strategies were done through a collaborative process to ensure alignment with existing planning frameworks. Several Board Directors participated in these initial planning sessions. Both strategies took nearly two years to complete since it was an extensive process of gathering, synthesizing, and validating information with tourism partners about the status and future direction of tourism in the Fraser Valley and Canyon. Both strategies will contribute to the tapestry of long-term regional and provincial planning that will support the development of British Columbia as a world-class tourism destination offering remarkable, authentic experiences that exceed expectations and align with the provincial brand.

Both strategies will help shape the future of outdoor recreation in the region and have a strong emphasis on growing outdoor recreation product development as expressed through their vision statements:

“The Fraser Valley is a vibrant, accessible, world-class destination that is well managed and enhances the visitor economy and destination appeal. Against a backdrop of rich culture and history, the mighty Fraser River and wild mountain vistas, we offer outdoor adventures, farm-fresh experiences, and opportunities to experience our way of life around every corner.”

“The Gold Rush Trail is a highly recognized, iconic touring route that is renowned for its vibrant connected communities, heritage preservation, cultural and indigenous experiences, natural landscapes, and outdoor adventures. The diversity of experiences attracts visitors year-round and generates ongoing, sustainable benefits for residents, businesses, and visitors alike.”

DISCUSSION

DBC’s focus on the *supply* side of tourism through these strategies is complementary to work the Fraser Valley Regional District (FVRD) is undertaking on the *demand* side of outdoor recreation. In 2017, the FVRD hosted a multi-stakeholder visioning workshop to discuss the future potential of outdoor recreation and tourism in the region. This workshop identified an information gap relating to outdoor recreation use economic data and the need for a comprehensive region-wide outdoor recreation management plan. A year later, the FVRD was successful in receiving \$282,000 through the Gas Tax Strategic Priorities Fund program to fund both a region-wide outdoor recreation economic impact analysis and management plan.

Last year the FVRD conducted a yearlong outdoor recreation economic impact analysis which will quantify the value of outdoor recreation activities, motorized and non-motorized, occurring within the region. This analysis study will provide data about the spending patterns, travel behaviours and characteristics of outdoor recreation users in the region. This vast amount of data is currently being analyzed and a final study is anticipated in March which will be presented to the Board. This information will also inform the outdoor recreation management plan (ORMP) initiative that is underway.

Currently there is no guiding outdoor recreation plan for the entire FVRD. With the Lower Mainland’s population expecting to grow to more than four million by 2051, there will be considerable outdoor recreation pressures on the FVRD. The ORMP is essential for future planning and outdoor recreation infrastructure development. It is being created through in-depth collaboration with local First Nations, and engagement with a wide range of organizations, including federal and provincial agencies, FVRD’s member municipalities, and recreation user groups through surveys, a [Web Map](#), and open houses. This collective approach to achieve a common vision and long-term strategic framework will help guide the future of a more robust and sustainable regional outdoor recreation economy within all our communities. The management plan is anticipated to be completed in April.

As previously mentioned, with DBC's strategic focus on the supply side of tourism, the complementary work the FVRD is undertaking on the demand side of outdoor recreation will dovetail well with their strategies. Inviting DBC to provide an overview presentation to the Board about both the Fraser Valley and Gold Rush Trail destination development strategies would be quite insightful since it will provide an understanding as to where tourism is headed in our region over the next ten years.

COST

The Gas Tax Strategic Priorities Fund program funds up to 100% of eligible costs. The FVRD received the full amount requested of \$282,000 for the FVRD outdoor recreation economic impact analysis and management plan.

CONCLUSION

With the DBC releasing their destination development strategies for our region late last year, both the FVRD's outdoor recreation economic impact analysis and management plan projects will provide the needed information as to what type of outdoor recreation infrastructure is needed and how best to manage this world class asset.

COMMENTS BY:

Stacey Barker, Director of Regional Services: Reviewed and supported.

Mike Veenbaas, Director of Financial Services: No further financial comment.

Jennifer Kinneman, Acting Chief Administrative Officer: Reviewed and supported.