

Future Of Ski Trails

Land Tenure for the Whitehorse Cross Country Ski Club- Sept 2008

The Issue

The WCCSC has been aware for nearly a year, of claim staking activity on the land occupied by our trail network. There are claims on the site that date back several years but there are also 85 claims that were staked last fall. The result is that only 22 kilometres of our trail network are now untouched by claims.

It is the perspective of the Board of Directors that the issue of land tenure on the trail network is bigger than simply claim staking. There are other interests on the trail network that also raise the possibility of future encroachment, for example, commercial or real estate development. The issue of secure land tenure for our trail network is of great concern to the WCCSC Board of Directors.

Our Work to Date

The Land Tenure Committee (LTC), chaired by Sue Johnson, has been working on this issue for some time. Meetings have been held with the Government of Yukon, City of Whitehorse, Kwanlin Dun First Nation and the Ta'an Kwäch'än Council, as well as with business interests, such as ATCO Limited. The purpose of these meetings is to open a dialogue with all key decision-makers to ensure WCCSC concerns are heard during any discussions on future land use in this key area.

WCCSC Position

Our position is that the area covered by the current trail network should be protected from future development.

During the past 35 years the club has developed and maintained a wide-ranging and internationally recognized network of trails and related facilities, often with the generous support of local businesses and governments. The occurrence of recent development initiatives and mineral claim staking activities have driven home the need to take concrete steps now to protect the fruits of past collaborative efforts and to secure our Area of Interest (See map on the WCCSC website) for recreational use in the future.

In keeping with this objective, a letter was sent to the Government of Yukon this past winter requesting that:

- security be provided to protect the trails and surrounding lands from damage related to claims-related work;
- the lands within the Area of Interest immediately be protected from further mineral staking;

- title to the lands within the area of interest be raised, and the title be transferred to the City of Whitehorse with sufficient restrictions on title to ensure, to the maximum extent possible, ongoing future use of the lands for recreational purposes (i.e., continued use of the area for cross country skiing in its present form); and;
- as soon as possible, the Area of Interest be formally designated as a Park under applicable legislation.

Similarly, a formal letter was sent to the City of Whitehorse, with the following requests:

- formally request of the Yukon government that the Area of Interest be immediately protected from mineral staking;
- enter into negotiations with the Yukon Government regarding the transfer of the lands within the Area of Interest to the City of Whitehorse;
- initiate activities within its purview and jurisdiction to facilitate the designation of the lands as a Park; and
- take all actions within its purview and jurisdiction to ensure protection of the lands for recreational use in perpetuity (i.e., continued use of the area for cross country skiing in, at least, its present form).

Recently meetings have been held with the YTG Lands branch and the City of Whitehorse city Major and Manager who have receptive to our plans. We have also sent a proposal to ATCO, as some of our trails are on their land, outlining our vision and desire to secure the future of those trails.

Next Steps

The next step is to arrange a meeting with both YTG and the City of Whitehorse. We will continue to work with ATCO. The trail network used by the 1,000+ members of the Whitehorse Cross Country Ski Club is a jewel in this city. And we will strive to ensure it remains this way in the future.

For more information visit the club's website or call any member of the Board.